Mondaiji-tachi ga isekai kara kuru soudesu yo Volume 7

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These are novel illustrations that were included in volume 7.

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竜ノ湖太郎

問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？
落陽、そして墜月

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魔王連盟ウロボロスと対抗することになった〝ノーネーム〟。黒ウサギの素敵ウサ耳がなくなるという緊急事態のなか、十六夜（いざよい）VS 殿下のギフトゲームが始まった！　一千体を超える巨人族の攻撃で大混乱に陥る煌焔（こうえん）の都で、耀（よう）はウィラと共にマクスウェルの魔王に、飛鳥（あすか）とジャックは混世魔王に戦いを挑む。そして〝魔王〟を名乗る者たちと正面対決する激しい戦乱の下――地下深く光も音も届かない地で、真の魔王の封印が解かれる――。

Tatsunokotarou
竜ノ湖太郎
illustration
天之有

落陽、そして墜月

問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？

角川スニーカー文庫

問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？

落陽、そして墜月

summon
召喚、〝氷結境界〟
Iyhrase gate

久遠
飛鳥

マクス
ウェル

殿下

逆廻
十六夜

オマエを倒せるのもまた、
この俺だけだから！

魔王は不退転。
混世の王は
討たれるまでが
王道だ

サンドラ?

ウィラ

春日部
耀

問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？

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口絵・本文イラスト／天之有
口絵・本文デザイン／百足屋ユウコ（ムシカゴグラフィクス）

MAP

Character

Prologue

————2222 Outer Gate ‘City of Moonlight’

Kuro Usagi ran through her home forest in tears as it was burning down. Her young, small limbs desperately pushed her forward, panting, and while she was frightened by the beasts howling in the moonlight, she frantically kept running. The main road was already full of beasts and no longer passable. What she was running through was an unpaved animal trail. Running barefoot on gravel and thorns, her young legs were painfully wounded and bleeding. But even then, Kuro Usagi kept running while she cried.

“Haah. Haah……!”

————Today was supposed to be a fun birthday festival, too. She’d wear the heiress clothes that her mother and aunt picked out for her, and she was supposed to spend her day having fun until sunrise like every other year after performing the Hounou-Enbu[1] that she’d practiced for so long. But when she turned back, her homeland was enveloped in flames and was falling into pandemonium.

"……Hi,cu……!"

She forced her hiccups down in her throat. If she pricked her ears, she would be able to hear the roars of the beasts that attacked her community. If she stopped moving her legs now, her young body would easily be ripped apart. Even the strong and resilient moon rabbits met their own end that way. They, endowed with a multitude of gifts and even being known as some of the best in the Little Garden, were easily shredded by those beasts. In spite of the barrier that should've had the providence of Sakra devanam Indra, they came commanding an army akin to a horde of gods.

"Father……Mother……!!"

Her parents took the rear guard to let her escape. Despite her concern for their safety, Kuro Usagi ran, tumbling through the forest. But behind her, she was already beginning to hear the panting of a beast. Limbs thicker than large trees felled the trees. Claws harder than steel tore up the ground. While fangs that could swallow mountains and rivers were bared. The beast's scurry quaked the earth as it steadily closed the gap behind Kuro Usagi. But even though it was a forest in night conditions, the moonlight was especially bright

tonight and it would be easy to spot her figure. The more she heard the crawling tremors, the more her fear chilled her spine. When Kuro Usagi was gazed upon by a ferocious glare as she ran through the forest, she was assailed by the sensation of a fierce blood-lust.

"……Ah,"

Her legs got tangled and she fell over as she felt the unusual wave of intimidation wash over her. Rolling down head over heels, Kuro Usagi crashed into a conspicuously large tree's trunk which was bigger than most in the forest.

"O,Ow……!"

She had smacked onto the roots that were protruding from the ground and she let out a scream as her young body creaked. Even if she looked at things objectively, it was impossible for her to keep running. She was quaking with fear as she clung to the trunk of the tree. The sounds of the tremors and the beast's laboured breaths accompanied the overwhelming pressure from its presence as it felled and crushed trees in its approach.

The beast that slowly appeared from the shade was———- an aberration with the body of a white snake with limbs and 2 heads.

"Uh, ah……!?"

Its ruby red devil eyes stared in her direction and that alone was sufficient to make her lips quiver without being able to let out a scream. Its massive jaw could easily swallow Kuro Usagi whole. Having caught the sight of its prey, the two headed monster leapt, weighing down on Kuro Usagi. The two headed snake, having caught an excellent prey, dripped drool from its mouth like a flood while intimidating Kuro Usagi. Lightly tapping Kuro Usagi's young, soft, beautifully snow white skin with its claws, it licked the blood from her wound. Downing it like ale, the pleased two headed white snake scrambled to see which head would devour her first. The young Kuro Usagi quaked with fear, and prepared for her demise.

"————————GEEEYAAAAA!!!"

A fierce roar that shook heaven and earth. But it was not that of the two headed white snake's. It was from a golden lion with a mane that shone brilliantly like the sun.

"Eh……!?"

Kuro Usagi thought she was hallucinating for a moment. The lion descended upon the two headed white snake which had come within ten centimeters of her nose . Its mane bustled about, looking like a meteor; all those who saw it would think that it was the sign of a king. The lion sank its teeth into one of two heads' necks and slammed it on the ground after shaking it about like a rag doll. At that moment, a fountain of blood danced in the air.

The two headed white snake took a fatal blow, but from the blood that poured out came serpents and scorpions which bound the lion's body. The white snake descended upon the now restricted lion. Its sharp, pointed claws teared at the lion's mane. The lion had already rolled over, covering its vital points, but the mane that the white snake had shredded was harder than vajra[2]. If the lion took a direct hit from that, it wouldn't

get away unscathed. The two headed white snake tried to follow up on its attack. But as if interrupting the two, another figure jumped out in verbal abuse.

"You idiot, don't let your guard down! What's the lion of the sun doing like that!"

"Grr, I don't need to hear that from the likes of you, demon child!!!"

The verbal abuse came from a female. With the moonlight at her back, she appeared, her hair gleaming brightly and vividly like gold threads, and dazzling looks. However large the Little Garden was, there was only one species with those outward features. Kuro Usagi, still not able to lift her legs, she held her breath in shock.

"A,A pure blood vampire……and a lion of the sun ……!?"

Confused by the bewilderingly changing situation, she finally let out a voice. At a glance, anyone could tell they were a strange combination. A vampire who controls the

night, and of the sun———-a lion who pulls the chariot of Surya[3]. Seeing opposing species together on the same battlefield was nothing short of a bizarre sight.

“You insignificant lizards, don’t think you can keep me down forever!!!”

The golden lion let out a roar like a gust of wind. As if in response, his mane released a surge of scorching heat, turning into a fire storm and burned away the rabble.

“……!?”

————A pure blood vampire and a lion of the sun . Fighting these two wouldn’t be favorable. Deciding that , the two headed white snake sprang back into the shade of the forest and left. The vampire and lion were about to chase after it, but a voice soon called them to stop.

“You two, that’s enough. There’s no need to chase after it anymore."

The voice that told them to stop was also from a female. Stunned as Kuro Usagi watched the events unfolding, she looked up silently at the figure of the woman who appeared from the animal trail. She wore a white trench-coat, leather long boots, and spiral shell

piercings on both her ears. Her gentle blonde hair was like confetti, and her friendly face in turn felt like it represented the depth of her benevolence as a whole. The compliant lion sidled up against the blonde woman and asked.

"But Canaria. If we leave that alone, it will continue to grow without limit. If we're to stop this at the roots, then it must be now."

"Nothing's going to change if we hunt down just one of them. Unless we take down the main body, they'll multiply infinitely."

"Even if you say that, leaving that alone is,"[4]

"Just listen to me. You may have been reinforced with the sovereignty of the sun, but you can only deflect sharp blades. You'd be a bad match against that dragon. …… But before that."

The woman called Canaria let out a breath as her gaze met Kuro Usagi's. Lifting up Kuro Usagi off the floor in her arms, she tilted her neck and smiled.

"Nice to meet you, little miss bunny. Are you alright?"

"Y,Yes."

She gulped as she nodded. Canaria also nodded back, smiling as her hair swayed like confetti.

"To fulfill our oath to the Alliance, we have made haste to the moon rabbits' place. What's your name?"

"K,Kuro Usagi."

Oh? Canaria said as she tilted her head. But quickly understanding the situation, she let out a bitter smile.

"I see. You haven't been given a name yet, have you."

"Y,Yes. At today's birthday festival, my mother was the one who was supposed to――-"

She was about to say, but nothing came out. Tears suddenly welled in her eyes as her sorrow surfaced. Her mother and father, her family, her tribe, all of them took up the rear to let her escape. This much, even a ten year old Kuro Usagi could understand. So even if she desperately tried to hold it in, her tears overflowed as they fell.

"……Where are your parents?"

"They said they'd go guard the gate that leads to the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods……my entire tribe, they stayed in the castle. Because I'm the heiress…… Take the blessing handed down to us and run, my father said……!"

As she spilled large tear drops, she handed over a gift card to Canaria. Looking at the gift card which depicted a black and white half-moon, she lowered her gaze as she figured out the situation.

"The authority of the moon and Chandra Mahal…… I see. So you're the rumored heiress."

Canaria delicately wiped away her tears, and gently hugged her.

————Moon rabbits are naturally endowed a multitude of gifts from their patron Lord of the gods, but amongst them, there were ones that possessed a special reality and even those that ranked the highest in divine armor. Despite the long history of their race, it is said that only three people have been endowed with the divine equipments. But now in the current generation, those records have been completely destroyed.

Kuro Usagi was just barely ten years old, and the one to have inherited four types of divine arms.

‘Vajra’s Replica’

‘Mahabharata Karna’

‘Brahmastra’s Replica’

Sovereignty of the Moon ‘Chandra Mahal’

Sakra devanam Indra, accompanied by the war god masses, the twelve Adityas. Among those, four of the war gods’ divine arms were left to this girl. Her unparalleled talent obviously had her tribe very agitated. To think that one of their own children, not only born with the sovereignty of the moon, but also with their old home, the Chandra Mahal. Although it was normal for some of the young in the race to be born with the Sovereignty of the Moon, but the one that Kuro Usagi’s been bestowed with from birth had been the hometown that they had lost for a long time—[Chandra Mahal].[5] This good omen would hail further prosperity for the moon rabbits, and no one doubted this as they rested their expectations on her. Since then, Kuro Usagi was set up as the moon rabbits’ heiress, and they celebrated her

birthday every year. Around this time, she was supposed to be spending the night having fun with her mother and father.

"Mm……You've done great getting this far. Leave the rest to us, and sleep well tonight. When you wake up——-we'll have finished everything by then."

When Canaria said that, a breeze blew through the forest. The gust of wind that blew through scattered the clouds in the night sky, projecting the stars across the entire sky. Leisurely raising her right hand, Canaria infused her power into a brilliantly dazzling ring. Waiting behind her, Leticia's mouth twitched in surprise.

"H,Hey, Canaria."

"With the heavenly gate connecting to the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods destroyed, the road for the twelve Adityas to come to the Little Garden has been sealed. ……Which basically means that the only ones who can stop that demon lord is us. If another heavenly army[6] comes out, the lower and middle floors will be scorched under the pretext of purification. I'd rather not see that happen. ———-So with that in mind, it's our turn, Croix Baron."

As soon as she said this, a shadow darker than the abyss draped over the night sky. Belonging to an extremely small amount of just holy spirits and devils, it was the power to control the boundaries of the world——-Astral Gate, which cuts through the heavens and unlocks the gate. The shadow that had crawled out from the cleft open night sky soon took the form of a faceless, planar human figure, and materialized, standing in front of Canaria wearing a tailcoat and bowler hat.

In front of an aberration one step above the white snake, Kuro Usagi could not hold back her pitiful screams.

“A,A,A real grim reaper……!?”

“YES! Khaha, this must be my favorite, a wild rabbit with an excellently promising future! There’s no doubt that this child will grow into a fine sexy lady! Is she the tribute this time, master!? Then let’s get hustling!! We’ll be bunking for three days and nights without food or drink, so let’s do our best!!!”

Eeek Cringing, her bunny ears drooped as Canaria held onto her. As if finding her fearful gesture interesting , the faceless tailcoat wearing grim reaper cracked open a

smile in the shape of a crescent moon and rolled around on the ground laughing.

————————Grim Reaper ‘Tailcoat Demon Lord’.

Portrayed in a sect currently in South America, it is known to people as a holy spirit of life, death, and pleasure. Standing at the crossroads to the world, it is said that he lets life force pass through, becoming omniscient. Even though he is known as a wise Godly spirit, his true essence is vulgar and thinks it right to interact with the opposite sex with raw passion, a god of love. In the equinoctial week, the day of the dead which is called Halloween, his spiritual status, which was symbolized by the passage of a thousand spirits in a few parts of the world, was undoubtedly very strong.

With no other choice, she handed over Kuro Usagi, was completely frightened by this grim reaper aberration , to Leticia. After letting out a small sigh, Canaria wordlessly stomped the tailcoat demon lord’s crotch under foot.

“Oh f-!?”

“Calm down a bit, you worthless god. She’s scared to bits.”

"E,Even so, what's the big idea stepping on my golden magnum, you bitch master……!?"

"No one cares about that, so notify the Alliance in my name. Tell them, 'Gather all the troops'."

————The figure that was convulsing while holding his crotch became perfectly still. The planar figure of the grim reaper, questioned in return with an extremely strange voice.

"……All the troops, you said?"

"Yes, all of them. ————I'm not letting you say that you can't, tailcoat demon lord. Around this time of early winter, it is the period that your spiritual status strengthens as with the control over your powers. Summon every community that can move."

She declared fearlessly as her white coat fluttered. The gentle expression she had just before was no longer there . Canaria's face now showed only that of a seasoned warrior, who has been through hundreds of battles, as she issued the command with that aura of hers. It was then that the tailcoat demon lord finally stopped fooling around. He looked towards the sky, carefully observing

with eyes that concealed its omniscience. After a few moments of surveying the surroundings, the figure caught onto the enemy's main body and clicked his tongue.

"……You can't be serious. That lizard is among the oldest of demon lords. Originally, that class ranks among the domain the twelve Adityas or the Lord of the gods. Even if you bring everyone together, who knows if we'll be able to win,"

"You fool. That's why it's so interesting."

Who wouldn't have fun in this predicament, smiled Canaria mischievously. The figure widened his eyes for a moment, but as if influenced by her spirit, he humbly laughed.

"……How nostalgic, that spirit is. It reminds me of when you killed the demon lord of dystopia. It makes me want to fall for you all over again."

"Heheh, fall for me all you want. ————————You can do it, right?"

The tailcoat wearing figure received his master's honest expectations. Complying with her order, the

servant gaudily laughed as he slashed a cross in the night sky.

“Khahahahah!!! Okay, I gotcha! Let’s have them make a grand entrance————————!!!”

In a flash, the tailcoat demon lord’s existence expanded enough to cover the sky.

The rift in the sky became a gate that connected their world to the spiritual world, and started summoning companions from far away. This cross shaped astral gate was one of the heavenly gates entrusted to the omniscient grim reaper. On the other side of the gate, opened by the passage of a thousand spirits, was————————a massive number of symbols, countable by the hundreds, streaming through.

“Banners……all of them are……!?”

While being held, Kuro Usagi murmured in amazement. They were all banners of veteran communities.

The flag of the [Demon of Laplace], with a million eyes.

The flag of [Salamandra], with scorching flames that illuminated the night.

The flag of [Draco Greif], running through the heavens.

The flag of [Avalon][7], with the shine of a holy sword.

Setting up bases in the four digit territories, they were all mighty veterans whose might alone would be equivalent to having a thousand. All of them were former inhabitants of the upper levels, and history's greatest floor masters. The first to answer the call, [Salamandra], let his banner fly and showed himself before Canaria's eyes. Following the fire dragon's banner, all of the winged dragons came flying through one after the other to land before her.

Canaria smiled at them, a bit surprised.

"……What a surprise. I didn't think the first one to come would be you. Would you like to tell me why, old man Salamandra?"

Canaria asked with a mischievous smile. The old massive dragon, who seemed to be the chief, sulkily snorted.

"Hmph……I'm not going to listen to your nonsense. You should be kind to these old bones."

"Then retire already. Sala-chan will make a good floor master."

"……What do you know."

The fire dragon snorted even harder at Canaria's words as she lightly smiled. Right behind them was the [Draco Greif] community and one of the gryphons, Draco Greif, followed. The dragon horn, complying with the gods of Greece, released lightning that could pass for a storm. Flapping his massive wings, Draco Greif landed and from his back, a young feline man popped his head up.

"Sis! It's been a minute![8] I see you're doin' fine!"

"Been a while, Garol. You too, Draco. ……Is that broken horn okay?"

"Hmhm, that's not something to ask after an emergency summoning. The situation is urgent, is it not?"

"Something like that. This time, to defeat this demon lord, right now we need numbers. Draco will lead his kin and support Avalon. Garol, go meet up with the Laplace's kids and play support. And Koumei————————er, wait a sec."

She furrowed her brow quizzically. Looking around, she sighed sulkily.

"……Where's Koumei? Wasn't he with you, Draco?"

"I believe he headed west a few days ago."

"Did he leave a message?"

"He didn't leave anything, nor did I hear anything."

With both hands on her hips, she let out a sigh, shocked from the bottom of her heart.

"Geez……that free and unrestrained person. He doesn't know that he's my strongest arsenal, does he?"

"Khahahah! There's no way that blockhead would know!"

No kidding, everyone nearby muttered. Fatigue rushed over Canaria as she dropped her shoulders, but she soon collected herself and raised her head.

"Anyway! Draco, Garol, follow your orders. Salamandra, construct a line of defense and a kekkai before the enemy herd gets out. Please remember that allowing even one of those God-classed fellows to escape to the lower levels would lead to a chaotic situation."

"Understood."

"Good luck to you too, sis!"

Flapping his wings, Draco Greif and Garol Gandach flew into the air. Salamandra's dragons flew away next. Kuro Usagi, who was listening dumbfounded to the strings of conversation, finally had the question 'Who is she?' welling up in her mind.

A pure blood vampire. The tailcoat demon lord. A lion of the sun companion.

The southern floor masters, [Avalon] and [Draco Greif] . The northern floor masters, [Salamandra] and [Laplace Demons].

No matter how you looked at it, they all had nothing in common, it was a nonsensical group. To call out this many strong communities with no questions asked, she wondered how important that person was. Noticing Kuro Usagi's quizzical gaze, Canaria responded with a mischievous smile.

"Come to think of it, I never introduced myself, heiress Usagi-sama. I am Canaria, tasked with being the adviser for '.....'."

"……Canaria, sama."

"That's right. We can discuss your future when the sun rises. We'll keep the moon rabbit survivors safe as best we can."

"R,Really?"

“Of course. We of the '.....' Alliance don’t leave anyone behind. Especially moon rabbits, who have fought alongside us. There’s no way we could abandon them. So————————”

Just rest easy, she said. Saying that, she kissed her forehead. At that moment, Kuro Usagi was suddenly assailed by sleepiness.

With a gentle voice like her mother’s, and a dependable hug like her father’s, Kuro Usagi sank into sleep. In the middle of her descent into slumber, Canaria whispered a promise.

‘When you awake, this nightmare will be over.’

*

And that is how that night of nightmares came to an end. At a later date, Kuro Usagi would become Canaria’s adopted child after meeting up with her again and would be accepted into '.....'. This was Kuro Usagi’s and Canaria’s————————their fated chanced meeting which carried the future of what would come to be called the No Names.

Interlude

———2105380 Outer Gate. In front of the fountain square.

It was the time of day when the sky began to be dyed a sunset red.

In Kouen City, it was around the time when Sakamaki Izayoi was fighting with His Highness.

At the corner of the bustling commercial district, Leticia Draculea was standing around unseen. She should've stood out from the crowd with her maid outfit and her beautiful blonde hair, but she flawlessly melded her presence in amongst the crowd of people. Despite the radiance of her blond hair, no one seemed to notice her. The flow of peddlers, while carrying their large luggage, had passed her by without noticing anything amiss.

Quietly observing the crowd of various species coming and going about their business, she checked the letter she had in her hand.

(……*To think that I'd receive this kind of letter from her.*)

Carved into the wax seal was the banner of the Queen Halloween, which carves the Trajectory of the Sun as well as the Boundary of the Stars. There is no one in this Little Garden who didn't know of this symbol.

The Celestial spirit of Gold and the Sun who governs the Boundary of the Stars.

Below Shiroyasha, it is a being that is entrusted with sovereignty over 6 suns.

In this Little Garden where the gods of war gather, there is only one, a great demon lord, who holds the title of 'Queen'. Even in the Little Garden, Queen Halloween is one of the best communities out there. The elites who obtain the favor of the Queen————————————the Queen Knights were also rumored to be able to best gods . And this express letter was sent by one of those Knights , Faceless, who had shared some past dealings with [No Name] from before.

(*This letter was actually addressed to Yō, but……but I can't just reject the meeting just because she's still out.*)

Kasukabe Yō, Sakamaki Izayoi, Kudou Asuka, Kuro Usagi, Jin Russel, and Pest were all out at the moment,

having headed over to [Salamandra]'s territory, Kouen City. The only ones left at the [No Names] headquarters were Leticia, Shirayuki-hime, and Gry the gryphon, who was out at work.

(*Come to think of it, Gry-dono was supposed to be coming back today.*)

As her blonde hair fluttered in a horizontal breeze, she looked up at the sunset sky in melancholy. The eldest No Name members should be busy preparing for dinner around this time. She had Lily handling the kitchen, so there was nothing to worry about there, but when she thought about clumsy Shirayuki-hime messing things up, her heart couldn't settle down.

(*I hope that today's dinner ……isn't going to be another cabbage feast.*)

Worried, she wrinkled her eyebrows in thought. But just then, she spotted a familiar figure across the bustling crowd. Wrapped in pure white armor atop a dress skirt, Faceless came through the Outer Gate with elegant steps, and without hesitating, she walked straight through the crowd to stop before Leticia. Leticia, who had concealed her presence, smiled bitterly in reflex.

"……That's sobering. I had confidence in not standing out, too."

"How modest. Trying to conceal your presence in a crowd as a beautiful maid is rather strange, I'd think."

"Good follow up. I'm sure you could become a wonderful maid."

She shrugged as she smiled wryly. Done with the small talk, Leticia pulled herself together and asked.

"So, what kind of business did you have with Yō today ? Since the letter had the wax seal of Queen Halloween, I' m guessing it's a royal decree from the Queen?"

"……Yes."

She answered in a non-eloquent tone, which was unusual for her. Putting her hand on her chin, she hesitated for a moment, and then muttered troublingly.

"It's about the ear muffs she had requested to summon ……it seems that a rift has opened up in the boundary between the outside world and the Little Garden because of it."

"A rift to the outside world?"

"Yes. If the rift continues to grow, it may devour a section of an Outer Gate whole."

Without any modulation, she spoke of an outrageously abnormal situation. The ear muffs she was talking about were probably the cat ear headphones. Leticia's face stiffened as she took a deep breath.

"……I guessed that something was off, but this is much worse than I thought. What exactly do we need to do?"

"First, bring the ear muffs. After that, if we can find the center of the rift, we should be able to deal with it without too many problems."

"Center of the rift? What is that, exactly?"

"That's————————————"

At the moment Faceless was about to answer. A large figure slowly shrouded the two.

“So this is where you’ve been. I’ve been looking for you, Leticia-dono.”

Faceless momentarily emitted an insecure mood in response to the large man’s presence and voice. It wasn’t out of hostility, but an unfamiliar presence and voice had crossed over her. It was the obvious thing to do as a knight. Leticia, guessing whose presence it was, voiced the man’s name as she smiled wryly.

“Sorry. I was about to go looking for you. Looks like I caused you some trouble, Gry-dono.”

“————————Gry?”

It was a familiar name to her. But in Faceless’s memories, the name Gry belonged to a gryphon. With quizzical eyes, she peered out from under her dance mask————————and became speechless.

“……?”

“Hmm? Well, if it isn’t the queen knight from before. It ’s been a while.”

It was a polite voice in contrast with his wording. The male voice was deep, but despite that, it had a friendly ring to it, and gave off a sense that the person the voice belonged to was a virtuous one. His tall stature was not intimidating and it was giving off something close to an aura of tolerance; hence, even if he stood before her, she would not feel intimidated. His facial features were graceful and he gave off a manly fragrance. However,——

His clothes were skin tight.

"……Gry-dono?"

"Yes, that's me……what is it? You look like a pigeon who's been shot by a pea shooter. If you're a queen knight, an anthropomorphization technique shouldn't be all that new to you, right?"

His cheerful smile could only be described as that of a gentleman's. In terms of physical human appearances, he looked to be in his late twenties. His chest and sturdy arms that matched his height were moderately built, and his brown skin made him look rather handsome. However, his clothes were skin tight. His clothes were fatally skin tight.

If one were to describe how tight his clothes were, Faceless, a veteran and one of the most skilled queen knights, had her mouth half open as she stared up at him ; that was how tight his clothes were. A person such as Faceless was dangerously close to falling to riposte from the shocking illustration.

He was gracefully handsome and smelled sweet, but those clothes were just painfully fatal for his looks. He could've been around 190 centimeters tall, but he was standing tall in shorts and a tank top. This could only have the opposite effect for the appearance he prepared. It went past comical to the point where the people would be embarrassed just from looking at him.

"……"

Forgetting to return the greetings, Faceless absentmindedly stared at Gry. Understanding her sentiments, Leticia sent out a lifeboat.

"Gry-dono. Faceless seems to be……well, surprised by your wild selection of clothes. What if you took this opportunity to put on some more civilized clothes?"

"What are you saying? I may have lost my wings, but a gryphon is a respectable king of beasts. It is

unreasonable that I would be embarrassed about my looks and adorn myself with such inelegant clothing. If wearing clothes is the mark of civilization, then the robust figure of a king of beasts would be the proof of tranquillity. This is something I absolutely can't give in on."

Gry declared with honest eyes. Leticia faltered upon hearing his sincere voice, but it troubled her to hear that from a man in shorts and a tank top. Leticia tried to think of a way to persuade him to rethink his attire, but Faceless took the reins.

"Excuse me……Leticia-dono. Please, don't worry about it. Their race has their own assertions. Trying to make him conform to his surroundings isn't a good idea. "

"I,Is that so?"

"Yes. Besides, this isn't the time. We must find the epicenter as quickly as possible."

"Hoh. It sounds like an emergency situation. I will lend you a hand."

"No thanks."

Faceless immediately replied. Taking her reply as being reserved, Gry cheerfully smiled and shook his head.

"There is no need to worry. There is no need for reservation amongst companions who have fought side by side. Coming into contact with each other is also part of the natural flow of life. First, let us hear the whole story at the No Names' headquarters."

Gry turned on his heels. His figure as he gallantly swaggered through the fountain square gave off a sense that his personality was one of a kind. If only his clothes weren't skin tight.

"……I see. The definition of 'unfortunately falling short even with all the effort put in' is that kind of gentleman."[magrefnotes: this part should be talking about a jap proverb or idiom. Ch version is the same… but the meaning was to fall short. So I merged the translated version of Aphraelyn with mine.]

Faceless rubbed her chin, and nodded in comprehension.

That’s wrong, Leticia thought in riposte[9], but she stayed silent. There was a need for haste. Gry, who took the lead heading towards the headquarters, was followed closely behind by the two.

Chapter 1

Part 1

———Kouen City Palace Headquarters – Third Right Wing.

It was around the time when the hazy moon rippled between the clouds. The pendant lamp that hung off the pavilion creaked in the night breeze, which enveloped the city in a warm airflow, disturbing the anxiety. Closely resembling dusk, Kouen City showed a truly beautiful landscape at night. The city was illuminated by all kinds of colored lamps, and cheerful ghosts and strange nocturnal creatures became rampant. The time when the moon rose up into the sky was Kouen City at its best. It would be about time for drinks at the bar. However, for this night, it was different.

The goblins running rampant in the city quietly retreated, and the candle lamps around the main road were blown out as they rocked about in the night breeze. All of the residents, who sensed the nervous atmosphere, held their breath as they stayed inside their homes. Kouen City was a city in the northern side governed by Salamandra. Living at a five digit outer gate, they are

sensitive to Little Garden's natural disasters————————————the presence of a demon lord.

Izayoi and His Highness's battle which happened at dusk became a rumor that spread like wildfire in Kouen City, and became common knowledge. From the scale of that war, there were few who didn't sense that there would be an attack by a demon lord in the near future. To protect their community, they had already begun to move. There were those who left the city after sensing danger. There were those who would hole up inside the headquarters until the battle with the demon lord was over. There were also those spirited ones who considered it a blessing to be able to hold up the head of a demon lord high. Those who wanted to test their power and make a name for themselves were all currently gathered in Salamandra's palace headquarters in the third right wing.

Sandra and Pest lightly coughed and went up on stage in the conference room.

"From this moment on, we will be begin the meeting on the demon lord alliance————————————the group called Ouroboros, and a way to deal with them."

She declared in a dignified voice as her red hair swayed. Next to her was Pest, who up until recently was imprisoned, but she was released in exchange for information. It seemed there were voices of protest among Salamandra's leaders, but in order to prepare for the attack, they needed as much information as they could get, which was how Sandra persuaded them. Also present were the communities that she selected.

Salamandra, which held the symbol of a fire dragon. Will-O'-Wisp, which held the symbol of a blue flame. Perseus, which held the symbol of the Gorgon's head. No Name, without a symbol.

The aforementioned communities were set up in the VIP seats. When the time comes to go against the demon lord alliance, Uroboros, they foresaw that the fight would happen at the main axis. Participating in the meeting on behalf of the No Names, Jin Russel, was talking to the pumpkin head sitting next to him, whose name was Jack.

"……What a crowd."

"Yahoho! There's more where this came from. If communities who were involved with the first generation Dragon Lord of the Stars and Seas join us, it would make us even stronger!"

Jack cheerfully bobbed his pumpkin head. Jin also replied with a wry smile.

Including the demons active in Kouen City and the six digit communities, their numbers exceeded twenty. They were active under the protection of Salamandra, and in emergency cases, they would send their main forces in terms with their contract. Among them were many who had experience in a demon lord's gift game. Communities affiliated with Salamandra, including the five, six, and seven digit communities, totaled five hundred twenty. Participants totaled over forty three thousand. Adding to this was a squadron of winged dragons and four thousand aerial fire dragons on standby. Although these numbers wasn't even half of what they had in their heydays, for the 5 digit communities, it was all they could've asked for.

"Come to think of it, Salamandra's ancestors, the Dragon Lord of the Stars and Seas, what were they like?"

"Who knows? When I came to the Little Garden, their name had already been shouted out, after all. Rumors say they are Taoist star spirits who fought with communities like Queen Halloween and the White Night King for sovereignty of the sun."

"Taoist……star spirits?"

Jin tilted his head in surprise. He had heard that they were of the strongest class, but he imagined that they would be of the dragon type. Furthermore, when speaking of Taoism, one thinks of a group of gods comprised mainly with holy spirits and dragon type divine beasts. Not only does its influence include the twelve dragons of the celestial equator who govern the sun, but Taoism itself is full of holy spirits.

(Speaking of Taoist dragons, the yellow dragon clan is pretty famous. Is that from a different sect altogether?)

Rather, maybe they were aiming for a misread or camouflage with that. The name of the strongest species that was part of specific sects and groups of gods was well known so they rarely hid themselves.

"Hmm……maybe Izayoi-san would know something about this, but……"

"That's it! That's also been bothering me! I don't see Izayoi-dono or Lady Asuka around, but should they not make their appearance in this meeting?"

"Y,Yes. It seems that everyone is making their own adjustments. ――――――――――Ah, it's starting."

Jin pushed his thoughts about the Dragon Lord of the Stars and Seas to the recesses of his memory and focused his mind on the meeting. Jack also looked over to the two girls on the stage. On the stage, Sandra instructed Pest to talk about Uroboros.

"Black Percher. Please explain in detail about Uroboros , the community you were affiliated with."

"……Alright."

Sandra went as far as to call her by her demon lord title. That was probably an act of demonstrating her authority over a demon lord. Pest didn't take kindly to this act, which was more like a warning, but she reasoned that this was how all defeated leaders are treated. Briefly looking at everyone's faces, Pest took a breath and then――――――――――let out a small sigh.

"About the Demon Lord Alliance……I have no objections to talking about Uroboros. But before that, I have one thing I need to say."

The meeting room murmured in an disrespectful attitude. Jin and Jack were quickly overtaken by a bad feeling.

"S,She won't say anything weird……will she?"

"Y,Yahoho! It'll be fine! Even if it's Lady Pest, she wouldn't be so daring in this place……"

————————Or maybe she would. As a matter of fact, she was the maid group's biggest problem child. Pest glanced at everyone sharply from the stage, and declared with an indignant attitude.

"You all suck. Go home. You're all too weak. Take your luggage and go."

((Wow!))

The palace's third right wing was assailed by a breeze of absolute zero. Even as a joke, everyone gathered here

were stalwarts who had confidence in their abilities. Winged dragons, spitting flames from their mouths, and demons, popping up anger veins, glared at Pest.

"You bitch……you, a defeated general, shouldn't be saying something so pretentious."

"Hmph. Even if you're a former demon lord, you're still just a small girl."

"Everyone gathered here are stalwarts who have won battles against demon lords. There's no reason we won't be able to shut that impudent mouth of yours, you know ……?"

The old-timers' eyes shined. They were so agitated that they released their human transformations and extended their horns to threaten Pest. Panicked by the unexpected developments, Sandra cut in.

"P,Please wait! Now is not the time to be fighting amongst each other! Pest, please refrain from saying anything unnecessary――――――――――"

"I,It's bad news, Sandra-samaaaaaaa!!!"

A winged dragon messenger burst into the meeting room with a bang. Suppressing the uneasiness in her heart, Sandra, as the leader, questioned calmly.

"What is it? Did the demon lord,"

"I,It's not that! It's the No Names! A group of three people from those No Names went to the practice area and said they wanted to test their skills……T,They've started taking on the stationed troops one after another!"

Wow, Jin groaned as he held up his head with his hands. Pest, while concealing a smile, whispered quietly.

"See? You're all just a bunch of rabble."

"Tch, don't get carried away, you bitch!"

"We have our pride too! We can't back down after listening to that!"

"Yeah! We're not going to take your crap————————!!!"

They continued to release their human transformations one after the other. Starting with the werewolves and fox

spirit like goblins, demons released hot air from their entire bodies and the winged dragons all rose up from their chairs. Broadly grinning, Pest jumped out through the palace's third right wing's window to the aforementioned practice area. The angered participants followed after her. Unless they fought this out, they wouldn't be able to concentrate. Sandra was speechless, but soon came back to her senses and glared at Jin.

"————————Jin."

"Y,Yes."

"I'm going to the practice area. I'm going to stop them, so come with me."

Jin took her voice that wouldn't let him respond head on, and hurriedly left the palace's third right wing behind.

Part 2

————————Kouen City Palace Headquarters – The practice area in front of the barracks.

Despite it being late at night, the practice area was alive with cheers————————rather, it was bustling

with roars. The practice area was only for the fire dragon clan, and was ten times larger than a regular practice area. Right now, the thoroughly prepared practice area was ablaze with a haze of fire.

"Grr, you shouldn't be having this much trouble against a little girl!"

"Rebuild the formation!"

"Make use of our greater numbers! They're not opponents we can't win against!"

Seven fire dragons roared as they dashed. In the center of the practice area, Kasukabe Yō was taking on all seven fire dragons. The large winged fire dragons soared at exceptional speeds. They were just barely able to keep up with Yō, who was aloft on a sparkling whirlwind.

"Damn you……!!"

Yō rose further on her sparkling whirlwind and dashed through the sky. However, her legs did not have Pegasus' armor attached to them. Right now, she was releasing a whirlwind with her own abilities.

"……You're incredible, Kasukabe-san."

Kudou Asuka was at the edge of the practice area, breathing hard. Sitting next to her was a young, enchanting girl————————Willa the Ignis Fatuus, who naturally nodded as she twirled her dazzling wings with her finger.

"Pegasus' wings……It's one of the gifts that Koumei left for Yō. Upon contact with a living thing, the genome tree interprets its phylogenetic tree and evolves its bearer ."

Willa shook her chest proudly as she explained. Sitting next to them, Izayoi also nodded in admiration.

"Hum. So right now, by using the gryphon's and pegasus' powers at the same time, her flight speed and physical abilities have rapidly increased."

"That's right. ————————But that's not the important part."

Willa pointed at Yō, who was fighting. After a moment , she released a surge of intense lightning. In her hand that released that dazzling lightning was———————— three hundred and sixty kinds of beast kings. She was gripping a pike that looked like a Kirin.

"With this……!"

In a flash, she launched the pike in a straight line. Resounding with thunder, the lightning that shot out in a fan pierced all seven fire dragons.

"Impossible……!?"

The hardened scales of the fire dragons, said to be forged in an active volcano, was no match for the lightning of a divine beast. Unable to move, the fire dragons fell while convulsing and crashed into the ground. Izayoi, having watched the battle, rubbed his chin and chuckled.

"Obtaining mobility with the gryphon and pegasus while imitating the phantom beasts' destructive powers through the genome tree. I see, this is powerful stuff."

He nodded in admiration. But it was not as optimistic a battle as he said it was. Yō came down from the sky with shiny beads of sweat flowing down from her forehead and gasping for breath. Gently wiping off the sweat with her right hand, Yō took a deep breath, steadying her breathing, and did her victory pose.

"Victory. It's thanks to Willa that I won."

"Victory. But that's Yō's true power. And it's thanks to Koumei."

She responded with a victory sign. Yō, suddenly remembering, raised a question.

"……Willa, how did you come to know my dad?"

Truthfully, it was something she wanted to ask about sooner. But because of the commotion from noon, there wasn't much time for an opportunity to ask about it. Willa pondered with a blank face, and murmured.

"Koumei……saved us from a vicious stalker."

"S……Stalker?"

"Yes. But it wasn't just any stalker. He had a peculiar infatuation and imagination, and repeated a disgusting manner of speech. I didn't like him, so I ran from place to place with Jack, but……that guy, he followed us everywhere with teleportation."

"That's……"

Asuka and Yō expressed bitterness at the same time. Izayoi put their expressions into words and spoke up.

"Stalker + Teleportation, huh. That's like a demon with a holy sword."

"T,That's right."

"Scary. That's scary."

"Yes. It's really scary. That's why I asked Queen Halloween to let me into the Little Garden. ……But that was a mistake. He spent hundreds of years in the outside world piling up training and merits, and opened a gate to the Little Garden on his own."

"And so Kasukabe's father saved you from that."

Willa nodded in affirmation. Listening to the story, Asuka sighed in pity and gently rested her hand on Willa 's shoulder.

"Willa's gone through a lot too……being targeted by that stalker."

"No, that might not be the case, you know? It could've been a decently good love story from a different perspective. What if you thought of his infatuation like this instead? 'Devoting myself to studying my power for many months and years, passing the boundary of the outside world! Willa, I've come to take you home!!!' ——————Like that?"

"Ew, that's disgusting!"

Willa shuddered as goosebumps appeared all over her body. Pushing her to say something that bad took outstanding talent.

"That stalker that drove Willa and Jack that far up the wall, he must've been that————————"

"Grr, what are those guys at Salamandra doing!!!"

They jumped in surprise and faced the direction of the voice. From the palace's third right wing came the old goblins after Pest, one after the other as they ran into the practice area. It seems they were enraged from seeing the defeated fire dragons. Meeting up with Izayoi and the others, Pest suppressed her smile and laughed cynically.

"I've brought them just like you asked."

"Well done. Looks you got them raring to go."

"Of course. It's all in a maid's work. ——————So weirdo, what are you going to do?"

Pest chuckled in provocation as she looked at Izayoi. But before he could answer, the group that followed Pest roared while in a state of rage.

"You bastards……you've all ran wild for quite a while."

"But your brutality ends here."

"You're going to pay for your big talk right here…… !!!"

Undoing their human transformations, the old timers' spiritual statuses all ballooned up at once. The three people's spiritual statuses, suitably above all others in fighting prowess, gave off an intimidating presence that overwhelmed the average winged dragons.

Created from a pale spiritual body and able to grow a hundred strong arms, the titan clan——————the

descendants of Hekatonkheire[10]. With the head of a goat, letting loose a sinister presence, the devils————————Baphomet's[11] kin. Boasting two horns, the chief of demons————————Shuten Douji's[12] faction.

In the middle of the practice area, while holding onto one arm, he bared his teeth.

"We man-eating fiends who have infested the northern side have passed many trials within."

"Although we were struck down by the Dragon Lord of the Stars and Seas, we are still of demon lord bloodlines. Don't lump us together with that halfwit."

"Kuku……my blood hasn't boiled like this in a while, human. Let the blood erupt and splatter like mist!!!"

"Hah!"

""GUAAAAAAAAAAAAA I'm doooooooown!!!""

Izayoi brandished his fists. Three of the goblins were blown away, crashing headfirst into the clock-tower in Salamandra's headquarters. ————————There wasn't anymore need to say it. It was a flat out degree of

nonsense. Mandra, who was watching the events in the practice area from start to finish, was shocked as the edge of his mouth quivered.

"……. Is that really a human?"

"Who knows."

Asuka, who was left behind, answered back. Izayoi, as if dusting off his fists, brushed his hands while looking at the old timers who had come from the palace's third right wing and smiled fearlessly.

"Well, that's just about it. What'll you do, oh great old seniors?"

"Nu……!"

Their exuberance from before was nowhere to be seen, and their words faltered. They weren't stupid. It didn't take long for them to realize the difference in their strength. Izayoi looked at them, who were having second thoughts, and his frivolous smile vanished as his eyes became serious.

"Sorry to interrupt while you're still shell-shocked. The demon lord this time around is about on par with me

, or maybe even higher than that. ――――――――――If you want to turn back, now's your chance. The next battle is going to create a lot of casualties."

"……,"

There was nothing false about his tone. Those words did not just silence the old timers alone. The people seated there, Kasukabe Yō, Kudou Asuka, Willa, Mandra , and catching up from behind, Jin, Sandra, and Jack, were unable to come to terms and were silent.

――――――――――The storm is coming. A storm bigger than all others encountered up until now. It will resound in the heavens, it will shake the earth, and it will create mountains of corpses and rivers of blood, the worst natural disaster. A champion that cannot be allowed to exist along side the order of the Little Garden will come to dye the town of dusk in the colors of hell. Izayoi, who could sense this more than anyone else, narrowed his eyes and declared.

"――――――――――I'll say this ahead of time. I'll be taking on their leader. I want you guys to handle the

forerunners. Conversely, if you can't do that, then there's no chance of victory. To make that easy for you guys to understand, we called you guys out here."

"……"

Murmurs stirred, spreading out between the fire dragons and old timers. They were conceited because they had escaped the jaws of death many times. Being told this head on by a young person like Izayoi was not pleasant. That is why Izayoi displayed his power ahead of time. It would be too late by the time the demon lords appeared. Especially against that boy who calls himself His Highness and Demon Lord Maxwell, the ones without power who attack in desperation would probably be throwing away their lives for nothing. One of the old demons, having pieced together what was going through Izayoi's mind, snorted and took a step forward.

"……Hmph. You say that, but is there a plan?"

"There is."

He immediately answered with confidence. The old timers opened their eyes wide with interest at his affirmation.

"We have a plan for dealing with each of the members we know of in Uroboros. So for that purpose————————we need everyone to be able to keep up."

He wordlessly appealed for help. The old timers were quiet for a moment, but suddenly let out an exasperated sigh.

"Grr, so indirect! It's courtesy to be humble when asking! Am I wrong!?"

"Then I ask of you. Please lend us your strength."

Izayoi promptly bowed his head down. This time, the old timers raised up their arms and resigned themselves.

"Hmph……well, in that case, we will. First, tell us this plan."

"We know that you're strong. Feel free to make the game."

"Hey, you Salamandra lads, get those guys down from the clock tower. It'd be cruel to leave them there any longer. The meeting will begin after that."

"U,Understood."

The young fire dragons spread their wings and lifted off. Izayoi turned around to face Asuka and Yō, laughing as he put his hands on his hips.

"The first stage is cleared. The problem starts here."

"Yes……with Kuro Usagi in that state, we can't use the judgemaster to hold this off."

"Yeah. We'll have to do our best."

The three stared solemnly towards no particular direction. The reason they were able to win their gift games against the demon lords until now was indeed, because of Kuro Usagi's judgemaster's ability to put the game on hold. But Kuro Usagi is currently not in any condition to use the judgemaster.

"Kuro Usagi……I wonder if she's alright. She was pretty upset after that, after all."

"Obviously. Just imagine. If, when you woke up————————your ears were on the top of your head, you'd be scared too, right milady?"

Goosebumps appeared as Asuka held onto her own body.

"……I would be scared."

"See. It's basically like that. If you're worried, just go visit her again."

"Yeah. ————————Right now, we should decide who faces off with who."

The three nodded to each other and thought about the objective for next time. There, Willa suddenly raised her hand.

"About that, I might have a proposal for you."

"……Hmmm?"

Izayoi looked at her with a quizzical face. Willa was known as one of the best in the northern side, but to Izayoi, his impression of her is that 'I don't know what she's thinking, but she sure has a big rack' and that's it. That she was participating in the game design was probably what was unexpected for him.

"Sure. I'll be taking on that white haired demon, so……starting with Demon Lord Maxwell, who's going to take him on? Like you, he can use the astral gate to teleport around. How will you keep that in check?"

"We'll aim for the spot where he'll reappear."

Willa smoothly talked about this difficult issue while Yō and Asuka looked at each other, troubled.

"……That's,"

"A bit hard, don't you think……?"

Indeed, if they could pinpoint the location of his reappearance, it wouldn't be that hard to conquer the astral gate. As a matter of fact, Asuka and Yō had seen Willa using the astral gate to teleport. That wasn't the kind of thing you could hold down with speed and firepower. It was none other than these two who had fought him who felt this way. To conquer the astral gate, they would need power with a completely different sort of vector————————

"————————I get it. So Kasukabe's father had driven off Maxwell using this method."

"Eh?"

Asuka and Yō raised their voices in surprise. Izayoi raised his face and confirmed it with Asuka, Yō, and Willa, in that order. He smiled fearlessly.

"Great. With that method, even when fighting Maxwell, the gears will click. ————————The match up's decided. Let's go gather Salamandra and the old veterans."

"B,But……who's going to fight Maxwell?"

Asuka and Yō questioned puzzlingly. Izayoi smiled mischievously and pointed at them.

Part 3

On the other side, Jin and Sandra were taken aback as they observed the chain of events. They foresaw a huge fight breaking out, but probably didn't expect it to be so anti-climactic. But not only did it become a huge fight, but the old timers took in Izayoi and the others and even began preparations for the strategy.

"How to say this……it's typical Izayoi."

"……"

Jin smiled in astonishment, but oppositely, Sandra looked at them quietly.

"……? Sandra?"

"Jin. Take care of them. I'll bring the rest of the people remaining in the palace's third right wing. Having him explain things will surely go well."

Turning on her heels, she went to return to the palace's corridor with a desperate expression.

————————The hazy moon had been hidden by the clouds at some point in time. The light from the pendant lamps also dimmed slightly late at night. Illuminating the corridor were only Salamandra's crafted glass candles' flames. Sandra, while striding down the dim corridor alone, remembered the scene from before and stopped walking.

(……*If I'd done the same thing, things probably wouldn't have turned out that way*.)

The veteran goblins and the fire dragon guards. To bring them together, she didn't need the position of the leader of Salamandra. Strength and achievements. Without using these two to fascinate the strong ones, there'd be nothing to talk about. But the eleven year old Sandra did not fulfill either of these when she became the leader. Normally, to become a floor master, one must pile up achievements, but she became the leader without any of that. There were many who were dissatisfied about this in the community.

If it was Sala[13], who had matured with the strength of the winged dragons. Or, if it was Mandra that took over————————

(……*Let's stop this. Going on with this would be rude to my bigger brother and sister.*)

Her wise sister cast aside Salamandra and absconded. But she must've had a reason for it, Sandra believed. Sala was not the kind of person who would cast aside her home town for no reason. She must've had a deep reason , a memory of heartbreak that caused her to leave it behind.

Her hard working brother's dragon horn growth was poor, and had no choice but to give up on being the heir. This was also nothing more than being born with bad luck. If she had understood Mandra's pain and helped him. Even while she felt the weight pressing down on her back, she took a step forward as if to shake it off.

————————No, to be accurate. She had intended to shake it off.

(————————*……!?*)

For a moment, Sandra imagined that the darkness was enveloping her. But that wasn't the case. What was taken from her wasn't the light. What was taken from her was the landscape's colors. The palace that was lit with candles suddenly became clad in monochrome shadows. Except just one————————'mixed', that one word on the clothes of a demon monkey.

"How pitiful. Normally, you'd be enjoying your time with your parents at this age, too."

The demon monkey glanced at her pitifully. There, Sandra finally realized who the enemy was.

(*It can't be……the Demon Lord of Confusion!! This is bad, I have to let everyone know……!!*)

"Ah, that's not happening. I've put the 'Activity Prevention' curse on you. You can't do anything anymore. You don't have to think about painful things while putting in effort anymore either."

The Demon Lord of Confusion walked around the monochrome palace leisurely. But there was no hostility from him. His eyes filled with pity as he closed in on Sandra.

"There's nothing to be afraid of. I was created from the mind of a child who, like you, was unreasonably twirled around by the people around him. I understand you better than anyone else."

A demon lord created from the mind of a child————————the Demon Lord of Confusion smugly looked at her while tapping her chest with his hand and whispering to her in a melancholy voice.

"In the depths of your heart, you wanted to live freely, but because of the stupid adults, all you became good at

was putting on a fake smile. Your position got in your way, and even if you made some effort, no one praised you for it. It'd be stifling no matter what."

(————————*You're wrong……!*)

"The sister who you thought was wise got her own freedom and went to enjoy life. Being judged for her every move, she thought nothing for her own little sister. "

You're wrong————————She wanted to shout that, but she couldn't move even a finger. But Sandra knew. That her older sister would never have absconded for that kind of cold-hearted reason. That her older brother tried desperately to support her from the shadows. Don't be misled, as she strongly persisted. Nothing but flattery has come from this demon lord's mouth. Don't be fooled. His objective lies elsewhere. Her ties with her family lie within her heart.

"Really————————Aah, I really can't go along with this!!! Just because you were a brat, your life was swung around on a stick, after all!! Because you ascended

to the throne, you couldn't carelessly let out your real intentions!! Those friends you made in your loneliness too――――――――――"

The Demon Lord of Confusion's hand brushed Sandra's cheek.

"――――――――――Betrayed you and became enemies. The friends you finally made betrayed you."

When the Demon Lord of Confusion touched her cheek, there was a tear on the end of his finger. She wanted to believe in her family, but she couldn't. The people she thought were her friends, Rin and His Highness, left Sandra alone. The moment she dealt with a demon lord one on one, Sandra was aware of her own weaknesses and incompetence.

(*Brother, sister……His Highness, Rin……Jin……!*)

Against this demon lord who could perceive naiveté, Sandra couldn't do anything to resist. If she peeled off her mask of floor master, there would be nothing left but an eleven year old girl. Even in monochrome, she knew that her face was pale. If she could move, her entire body would be quaking with fear.

"Truthfully, you were afraid to fight a demon lord. Of course you were. You're still eleven years old, after all. For that, I'm fully sympathetic for you. ……You've done great up to this day."

The Demon Lord of Confusion sent her a compliment from the bottom of his heart. That was the last compliment Sandra would ever receive. She was not a fool. She had realized what kind of fate was in store for her after this.

(*Am I going to be spirited away……?*)

"Yeah. Your consciousness won't resurface. You'll become a part of me. This monochrome world is the last thing you'll ever see."

There was nothing to worry about anymore. That was the last whisper from the Demon Lord of Confusion.

Sandra's vision faded and became completely black. Her body's senses floated up and felt like they melded into the air. The last moment when her consciousness and body were connected————————her sister and brother, and the people important to her, their faces floated up and vanished, and as if clinging onto those bonds, Sandra shouted for the first time in her life.

'Help me'.

This youth's death throes would not be heard by anyone in the world, becoming foam and vanished. Having watched the entire event from the opposite side of the corridor, His Highness and Rin confirmed that things had proceeded smoothly and nodded at each other.

"Sandra has fallen in our hands. With this, the Dragon Lord of the Stars and Seas' heritage————————the False Star Creation Chart is halfway into our hands."

"Yeah. We've seized the most important gift of all. After this is the capture of the Genome Tree and the origin candidate."

"Yeah. In the case that becomes impossible――――――――"

The two both swallowed their words. Putting that into words meant for these two that they would reluctantly be using their last resort.

"In the case that we fail……we will undo that demon lord's seal and withdraw from Kouen City."

"Yeah. If that becomes the case, I'll follow my own judgement. Let everyone know. No matter what happens , everyone must live."

It was a light tone, but His Highness' face was unusually stiff. So was Rin's. Her normally bright smile was clouded over like the night sky. Rin uneasily peered at His Highness' face, and mending her normally mischievous smile, questioned His Highness.

"We……can win, right?"

"We can. You'll make that happen, right?"

His golden eye gleamed as he retorted in response. Confidence returned to Rin's eyes upon hearing his voice .

"Of course! We will definitely win this for His Highness!"

"I'll be expecting it. So, what's the next move? When do we make it?"

They had already collided with Izayoi and the others today. Retreating would also probably be one of those moves. But Rin swung her head to the side.

"The day won't come. During this night, we will conquer Kouen City."

"Heh? That's quite hasty."

"A lot's been discovered about us, after all. There's also no more reason for Pest-chan to regret providing information. Right about now, the plans they have to counter us should be in shambles. ——————That's why we should seize this opening. Now, while they're agitated and making their preliminary preparations, is the last opportunity."

Her black hair fluttered in the night breeze as she advised him in a dignified voice. His Highness tapped his chin and thought for a while, but as soon as he raised his face, he smiled excitedly.

"Alright. Let Aura, Graiya, Maxwell, and everyone else know. In one hour from now, we will begin the war throughout the city. I will be giving out the signal, so match up with that."

"Aye aye, sir!"

Rin, having gotten back her cheeriness, gave a bright reply as she became invisible. His Highness, who was left in the palace, erased his presence and held his breath in the dark. Looking up at the cloudy night sky, he whispered with strong determination.

"……We'll win. We'll show them. Because for us……there's no going back."

Chapter 2

— Kouen City Palace Headquarters, 8th Left Wing.

Kuro Usagi had been arranged to a VIP room in the 8th left wing of the Imperial palace. Gazing at the night sky from the balcony of her room, she let out an uneasy sigh as she gazed at the moon hidden between the clouds .

"Ah… I can’t bathe in the moonlight."

Vacantly starring at the night sky, she recalled the memories of her ancestor’s distant homeland.

“Moon Rabbits” were able to develop through the absorbing of spiritual energies as they bathed in the moonlight.

Similar to the trainings for those on the road to deityhood, who would have to absorb the energies of the light from the sun and moon for a span of a thousand years to obtain the spiritual cultivation of a deity, the [Moon Rabbit] spirits would mature much faster in comparison.

The time it took for Kuro Usagi to reach her Independent[14] self today had taken over two hundred years.

Until just a few years ago, she had the appearance of a 10 year old girl.

(*It had been surprising when the body suddenly expanded in size. But, the surprise is still incomparable to this.*)

She ran her hand over her head with a bitter smile. She no longer had the rabbit ears which had always grown atop her head.

They were her prized rabbit ears which she brushed every day without fail and they have disappeared together with her usual sense of confidence. Moreover, the problems did not end with just their disappearance.

(*The birdsong that could be heard in the past… the words of the faeries… the babbling of distant rivers, they are all silent now.*)[15]

Her eyes were downcast as she strained her ears.

However, no matter how much she sharpened her hearing, she could only hear the sound of the lonely wind. Each time the night wind blew strongly, she could feel her powerlessness.

Today, she was no different from a human girl.

— The Spear of Victory and the Armor of the Sun.

It was a Game <Trial> imposed by the God of War, Indra, in the Epic of Mahabharata.

Karna, the son of the Sun God, had the Gift <Blessing> of immortality when he donned the Armor of the Sun. However, in exchange for its mighty powers, the armor itself melded to his skin, and he was unable to remove it. The God of War, Indra, took advantage of one of Karna's self-imposed constraints to demand Karna to hand over the armor while hiding his identity.

Though Karna refused at first, he decided to hand over the armor of immortality when he noticed the other person was Indra. However, to remove the armor of the sun, he needed the resolve to die.

Using a knife… he skinned his entire body and dedicated the armor of the sun to the God of War Indra.

(*… Touched by his devotion, Indra granted him the Spear of Victory that could only be used once. This is the legend of the Armor of the Sun and the Spear of Victory.*)

Since then, the spear and the armor were Gifts bestowed upon the most devoted Heralds of Indra who have the utmost sense of altruism.[16]

However, this Gift had a restriction imposed on it due to its overwhelming force.

Using both the Spear and the Armor together in battle — Like the hero Karna, there would be a penalty or more .

"I… I wonder what I should do from now on."

She had broken the rules and lost her Divine powers. With things remaining as they are, it might just be fortunate for her already.

Having lost her Divine powers, it was a miracle that she maintained her Spirit Ranking. In the worst case, she would have disappeared.

However, the Kuro Usagi of today was just a normal human girl.

She looked up at the starless night sky with unease.

Though she was surprised when her body had suddenly grown back then, she was definitely more pleasantly surprised than terrified. She was proud of herself when she had received the ability to fully use the Divine Arms that came with her Independent stage. Though her rights as the [Judge Master] gave her few opportunities to participate in Games, she was confident of her power to stand up to the worst situations.

She could not defend her home 200 years ago. As she was now—

"… Stupid. Stupid stupid stupid, I'm so stupid!!!"

Gasun!

"Kuha!?"

Regretting her conceit, she hit her head against the balcony's rails with full force.

However, it was too much of an impact. Since she forgot her body was now no different from a normal human's, Kuro Usagi rolled about the balcony nearly fainting in agony.

While holding her red, swollen head, Kuro Usagi rose with tears in her eyes.

"Uu… It hurts…!"

"That's obvious. Are you an idiot?"

Hyuu, Izayoi's face peered from beneath the balcony.

He had likely heard Kuro Usagi's scream and jumped up from the balcony below.

Though Kuro Usagi was surprised for a moment, she was no longer surprised by Izayoi's eccentric behavior. Still, he technically broke into Kuro Usagi's room by doing this.

Kuro Usagi's cheeks swelled in anger as she turned her head away from Izayoi, who had jumped up without her permission, seeming to be throwing a little tantrum.

"H, Hmph. This is Kuro Usagi's room. Even if Kuro Usagi is being stupid, that's not a concern for Izayoi-san."

"That's true. But, you need to take care of your body a little more. Ojou-sama and Kasukabe are quite worried about you."

Izayoi flipped himself into the balcony[17] with a huff that sounded like an older man.

Though it is very impolite that he had entered a girl's room without her permission, the fact that he did not kick down the door to enter is already a development. Compared to a few months ago, it was great progress.

黒ウサギの髪は
時が経てば、
もっと黒くなって
いくはずです。

いざよい
十六夜

黒
ウサギ

Standing at the balcony, Izayoi's gaze unconsciously drifted and focused on Kuro Usagi's hair.

"Hmm… Perhaps it's because your rabbit ears have disappeared, and your hair seems darker than before."

"That's right. Kuro Usagi's hair had been imbued with divine powers and carried the luster of the moonlight. But given some time, it will become darker."

Hohou. He stood behind Kuro Usagi and let out a sound of admiration. Perhaps he liked darker hair, since he began to knit Kuro Usagi's braid her hair wordlessly.

Though Kuro Usagi was amazed by Izayoi's random actions, he was not one to stop, even if scolded. Kuro Usagi sat down on the balcony chair and sighed before speaking again.

"You're quite good at braiding hair. But, don't you need the time to prepare for the fight?"

"More or less. After all, my role is to knock out that white-haired brat. The ones who need to prepare to welcome those guys would be Kasukabe and Ojou-sama."

"… Is there a chance for victory?"

Her words were filled with her uneasiness. The next time the Demon Lord Alliance strikes would definitely be an all-out battle.

There was the Demon Lord of Confusion, the Demon Lord Maxwell, and the white-haired boy they called ‘His Highness’.[18]

They had not shown everything they had.

The Demon Lord’s greatest ability was in imposing a Trial by force— [Authority of Host Master].

They could choose the Game Rules in their Gift Game, which could make them peerless.

Just like the ‘spiriting away’[19] and the power of the Black Plague belonging to Pest, the compulsory penalties forced by Leticia, there was an infinite variety difficulties.

Challenging a Gift Game that is still unknown to them would be equivalent to betting their lives in the battle.

Furthermore, this next battle could not be interrupted with the jurisdiction of [Judge Master]. Izayoi and the others would have to bear the brunt of the enemy's attacks while aiming for a Game Clear.

However, in spite of the situation, Izayoi simply shrugged his shoulder and laughed.

"Well, it's a fifty-fifty percent chance. After all, we're in a race for time already. Victory and defeat would then be decided with our level of preparation. I can't guarantee we'll win, but at the very least — I think we need to get rid of that Rin in this battle and chase the others away to win."

The dark-haired girl who serves His Highness as an attendant.

She uses a mysterious Gift, [Achilles High] which could manipulate distance, and he heard from Pest that her Game Make would essentially be impossible to surpass. Kuro Usagi, who had fought against Rin personally, still had no means of opposing her ability.

"That's right… if we want to get rid of that girl, we can only make use of an [Astral Gate] that can reduce the

distance to zero instantly or prepare a unique gift that has activation requirements."

On this point, they had gathered all the required talented individuals for this battle.

Willa the Ignis Fatuus. The [Demon of the Azure Flames] who governs the boundary of life and death. Pairing off Willa and Rin in a fight, they had a chance of victory.

If there was no other way, Willa would be Rin's opponent—

"— No. Leave her to Ochibi-sama."[20]

Eh? Kuro Usagi let out a sound in surprise.

Izayoi shook his head and laughed smugly.

"Though we have no plan for it, the person in question wants to give it a go. Well, the chances of victory is roughly fifty-fifty at this point."

"Th, that's, will he be okay?"

"Who knows. But if there's no other choice, I'll go help him. I can't let him do the unreasonable."

He seriously declared that he would help in an emergency.

Kuro Usagi quietly watched him from the side.[21]

(*… Izayoi-san really doesn't show his real self.*)

When Izayoi was summoned to Little Garden.

When the reconstruction of the Community hung in the balance and the news was broken to him.

When she was cornered in her fight against a Demon Lord.

He would always be standing before the frontline of the battle, think more than anyone else about the solutions and see further than anyone else about future possibilities.

There was no need for her to know of his hidden past. Kuro Usagi, who had fought by Izayoi's side, could already see his beliefs and values.

“Justice stands with me.” — He sincerely believed that, he lived with pride and was not ashamed of it.

He did not dismiss the justice of the world, yet he moved forward with his own.

The shadow of his back overlapped with that of her beloved benefactor.

"… Like I thought, you’re similar to her."

"Hm?"

He stopped from her sudden words.

The typical innocence in Kuro Usagi’s eyes were lost as they were clouded with anxiety. She gazed at the night sky covered in dark clouds; her mind already drifting away from the balcony.

However, her gaze soon resumed its strong edge.

Even during this cloudy night sky without moonlight or starlight, a desire which could not be defiled shined within Kuro Usagi’s eyes.

Her strong gaze which tore through the nightmare which was about to lay siege to the “Capital of Moonlight.” Her tender voice. She was a woman with unshakable faith and ideals who carried the Emblem of 「 proudly in the air.

"Canaria-sama… she was the founder of the old [No Name]. When Kuro Usagi’s parents were lost, she was someone who adopted Kuro Usagi who had not a single relative left alive. You are very much like her, Izayoi-san. "

"… Hmm. How so?"

"Your soul."

Kuro Usagi responded promptly as she looked at him, eye to eye.

Even that sort of fearless direct eye contact that he currently held was a reminder of her benefactor’s face.

However, that could not be possible. Izayoi was a boy summoned from another world. He had no connection to Canaria who was born in Little Garden. Kuro Usagi shook her head as if ridiculing herself.

"I apologize for saying something strange so suddenly. "

"That's not the case. I'm interested. What kind of person was she, this Canaria-sama?"

Izayoi, who had completed braiding her hair, smiled in satisfaction and asked.

Unexpectedly, instead of Kuro Usagi's rabbit ears perking up — her eyes shined and a bright smile lit her face.

However, that smile did not last long.

"— I'm also a bit anxious to know the answer too. What kind of woman was she?"

A boy's voice came from above the balcony.

Izayoi's smile disappeared in a moment as he held Kuro Usagi close to back off with a hasty kick. Even though her thoughts had been slow by a beat due to the sudden change in situation that stiffened her body, she had also understood who the voice belonged to.

The boy with white hair and golden irises, known as “ His Highness” calmly spoke from the roof — and looked down curiously at the two of them.

(*It can’t be… He’s too early…!*)

Not even half a day had passed since the Demon Lord Alliance had declared war.

Still, it was not so mysterious when thinking about it.

With just another day, the other [Floor Master]s would be arriving in this city.

From the East, the [Great Sage of Maelstroms] the Saurian Demon Lord. [22]

From the South, the [Draco Greif] Alliance.

From the North, the [Onihime] Alliance.

If all of these powers gathered, even if it were the Demon Lord Alliance, they would not be able to do anything then.

Since His Highness had planned to have [Salamandra] annihilated from the get-go, they would have already prepared in advance for their attack.

Most likely, his attack earlier that day was to have Sandra 'spirited away'.

Despite the commotion in the Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames during the day that made the security around the palace tighten many folds, they were still able to come up with such an immediate and suprising comeback that showed their boldness.

(*I figured he would appear tomorrow morning at the earliest ……It would seem that he's more skilled than I thought.*)

He somehow sneaked in — but it was too late to ask how. They had been invited as Guests of Honor of [Salamandra] for 2 years and it would be simple enough to grasp the structure of the palace with that amount of time.

Izayoi, still holding Kuro Usagi, laughed sarcastically.

"Ha. Though they call you Your Highness, it would seem that peeping on others is still not below you."

"Hm? Am I interrupting your tryst?"

"Of course. Kuro Usagi and I were scheduled to have a little meeting in the room after this where I can do DingNingKluankDong[23] to her to my heart's content……"

"We weren't!"

"We weren't going to do DingNingKluankDong?"

"We weren't!!"

"We will do DingNingKluankDong."

"We, we won't…!!!"

Kuro Usagi protested in his arms while struggling with flushed cheeks, but she lacked her typical strength and harisen[24]. It seems she had lost the strength of her typical verbal retorts.

His Highness laughed seeing the exchange and spoke again in seriousness.

"Well, let's set the joking aside. You were speaking about the [Creator <Songstress>], Canaria, right? I'm also quite interested in her. Would you mind if I listen while you speak?"

His Highness leaned against the wall with joyful eyes.

However, as soon as she heard his words, Kuro Usagi's expression suddenly changed.

"Please wait. That… um, what do you mean? Wasn't Canaria-sama captured by you?"

— What? His Highness frowned as he looked at Izayoi .

Izayoi clicked his tongue and said "Shit."

Kuro Usagi had not yet thought of the possibility that the old [No Name]s were banished to other worlds.

Though he knew that the time to speak of it would come eventually, but it just shouldn't be discussed now. He did not want to give the current mentally vulnerable Kuro Usagi any further uneasiness.

Izayoi noticed his mistake and pushed Kuro Usagi into the room.

"Sorry, but the small talk ends here. Kuro Usagi, run to the 5th Right Wing of the palace right now. Mandra said that place is the safest."

"B, but, if I don't check to see if Canaria-sama is safe…! "

"It's good enough if you leave that to me! Hurry and go!!!"

Bikuri, her body shook in fright. Izayoi was speaking and acting different from normal.

His Highness was taken aback by Izayoi's sudden change, but he understood the situation immediately. At that moment, he laughed loudly to the sky.

"I understand… Ah, I see. So that is how it is! In other words, you… No, all of you! So they have heard nothing of how it all began 3 years ago!"

"Wha…?"

Though Kuro Usagi disliked his suggestive words and grew angry, His Highness ignored her interruption.

His Highness was bursting with laughter, as if he had just seen a comedic masterpiece.

Though His Highness laughed for some time, there was no child-like quality in his expression when he recovered to look at them once more. He captured the two people with the gaze of his golden eyes that reeked of violence and raised his right hand.

"Telling it to you guys might just be interesting but I guess leaving things as they are, is interesting in itself. It was worthwhile seeing your reaction."

As he spoke, a magic tome appeared in his hand —< Erin Grimoire> which originally belonged to the Titan tribes and also the book that destroyed [Underwood].

"That book… Could it be…!?"

Just then, a violent wind that accompanied the movement had whipped up the <Erin Grimoire> into the air like confetti which rained over the city.

Standing in the eye of the violent storm calmly, His Highness laughed ferociously as he stared at Sakamaki Izayoi.

"Look closely, Sakamaki Izayoi. We are Candidates for the Origin, this is but a fraction of our power…!!!"

Piece by piece, the dancing pieces of parchment were dyed black, forming jet-black sealed scrolls.

<<Gift Game: Tain Bo Cuailnge>>

· Leader of the Participants: “Sakamaki Izayoi”:

· Host Side Game Leader: “ ”:

· Game Territory: A 2 km radius from the [City of Brilliant Flames]'s center.:

· Game Outline:

*** This is a plunder[25] type Game enforced on the Players by the Host**

All crimes will be forgiven within this Gift Game so long as the following conditions are met:

***Condition I: The Game Leaders will have a decisive one on one duel**

***Condition II: While the Game Leaders are duelling, all crimes of plundering are allowed (including death and casualties)**

***Condition III: The men on the Player Side will consume double their stamina so long as the duel continues (there exist exceptions)**

***Condition IV: Should the Game Leader of the Host side be defeated, the conditions are reversed**

***Condition V: Should the Game Leader of the Player side be defeated, it will be impossible to lift the conditions.**

***Condition VI: A Game Leader will have a forced defeat should he leave the Game Territory**

Conditions to End: The war will end when Game Leaders of both camps mutually agree on the end conditions:

***Should a Game Leader die, the war will only end if the remaining Game Leader allows it to end.**

Oath: Respecting the above, under the pride of its Emblem, the [Ouroboros] Alliance will hold a Gift Game.

“[Ouroboros]” Seal

Kuro Usagi and Izayoi took one of the fluttering pieces of paper in their hands. Her hand and voice shook as she shouted.

"I, Impossible! The <Erin Grimoire> should be usable only by those of the Celtic Giant race! How is it possible for you to use its Authority of [Host Master]…!!?"

"Who knows? That is not something you need to know , o’deity of the Moon[26]."

The color on Kuro Usagi’s face drained out in her state of shock, but His Highness did not answer.

The situation had become worse with every passing moment.

The earth beneath the [Capital of Brilliant Flames] trembled as the entire palace was intensely shaken. Simultaneously, a war cry was heard which reached deep to the VIP room.

"UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!"

The ferocious roar was unforgettable. Several months ago, the same group attacked the underground city. Now , the looming group of Giants approached the “Capital of Glittering Lights.”

"Giants!! There are still remnants!?"

"Yes. But they are different from before. We have bestowed a new Gift on those guys. Also, the male Fire Dragons of [Salamandra] are going to feel unwell under these Game Rules… Now, what will you do, Sakamaki Izayoi?"

The ferocious cry pierced the heavens as they approached the “Capital of Glittering Lights” with a series of tremors and clouds of dust.

This was no longer an issue of pros and cons. Izayoi quickly took action. He closed the distance with His Highness to the extent that the scaffolding exploded, his fist aimed toward His Highness' torso from beneath.

Though His Highness caught it in both hands, the balcony quickly dropped down from their collision.

"I, Izayoi-san!!"

"I told you already, GO!! You're being a nuisance!!"

All the words that she wanted to say were stopped by Izayoi's angry yell. Though it was mortifying, Kuro Usagi had no combat potential now. It was clear she would be seriously injured just by getting caught in the fall.

Good luck, Kuro Usagi shouted in regret as she disappeared into the palace interior.

Izayoi and His Highness jumped down using the remains of the balcony as footholds and landed on the grass beyond the moat. Neither had gone full throttle yet. If they had fought with full force, the palace would suffer a devastating blow.

The palace backyard was the least populated area where few people would pass through; hence, even if it were that level of collapse and explosion to occur, it would still require some time for the soldiers to arrive. Though the sounds of the guards calling out in the distance travelled to their ears, it would take time for them to gather and arrive here.

His Highness stared at Izayoi with his golden eyes while smiling.

"I was surprised. You seem quite overprotective. I did not receive that kind of impression from you."

"That's hardly the issue. Rather, saying that she's in the way wasn't a lie… well, compared to that, you're a real surprise as well, especially this <<Tain Bo Cuailnge>>. If my memory is right, it's a war written in a passage of a fictional historical annal… Isn't that about Cooley's role in cattle disputes from < Táin Bó>[27]?"

"You are about half correct. In this world of Little Garden, the <Erin Grimoire> has the same value as the historical truth… Do you know of the concept of a [Paradigm Shift <Turning Point of History>][28]?"

"Yeah. I just learned about it recently."

Izayoi returned a nod of confirmation to His Highness.

— The world of Little Garden was unevenly distributed along the various time axises.

Even if an event was a historic fiction, in a different time stream, it would be a historical fact. Its existence was allowable so long as it fit the rest of history. It would be a truth in this land of Little Garden.

Izayoi read the words on the Geass Roll in his hands before crushing it.

"The rules of plunder are in effect only while we " Duelists" are fighting. Also, there is the curse of Maeve which weakens the men on the Player Side. This curse will remain until I win? My, this is quite an important responsibility I have!"[29]

"But you do not hate it, right?"

"I won't deny it."

They both took a suitable distance while bantering with one another.

Though both smiled, their eyes showed no amusement .

"However, this is quite unexpected for this Game… Honestly speaking, I thought you'd avoid a fight with me."

"Oh? Why?"

"Because only I can beat you."

Izayoi made his declaration. His words were neither arrogance nor provocation. He spoke as if it were purely a fact.

The Demon Lord Alliance — Only Sakamaki Izayoi could defeat the [Ouroboros].

His Highness, without denying anything, spoke sincerely.

"Yes. That is not a mistake. The only one who can defeat me in this “Capital of Glittering Lights” is you… But that is why I came. Since the only one who can defeat you is me."

His gold eyes shined sharply, and a brutal smile appeared on his lips.

There was no vicious trick or hidden agendas.

They were Joker <Trump> and Joker <Trump> thrown against each other from the start, and they would determine the flow of battle.

"…"

Izayoi narrowed his eyes as he looked down on His Highness.

The connection he felt in the previous battle was not an illusion.

Sakamaki Izayoi and the white-haired, golden-eyed boy would inevitably settle their fight. This was not something to decide victory or defeat in the battle between the [No Name] and the Demon Lord Alliance, but it was simply their instinct.

"Nice. That's some good ambition there, Hakuhatsuki <White-Haired Demon>."

"… Hakuhatsuki? Though you said it before, what do you mean by that?"

"It's something I decided. Since you're a white-haired brat, you're Hakuhatsuki. Using an honorific title to address my opponent as 'Your Highness' in a fight to the death, isn't that strange?"

He placed his hand on his waist and spoke in a disappointed manner.

Though His Highness should have gotten angry for having been treated like a child, he strangely consented and nodded.

"I see. It is as you say. There is no obligation in using honorifics for people who are out to kill each other."

"Right?"

"Yes. But now that you have pointed that out, the obstinate desire to have the opponent address them in respect is also the attitude of those in authority."[30]

One step.

Taking a step forward, the two measured their distance while speaking.

Like a signal, screams and roars could be heard erupting from various parts of the palace all at once. The main force of the [Demon Lord Alliance] had infiltrated and were taking action.

His Highness, with his golden eyes, gazed sharply at Izayoi—

"It is decided, Sakamaki Izayoi. In your last moments, I will make you call me by my title—"

"Ha, you can try, Hakuhatsuki!"

The two roared and collided.

The air burned.

The earth was crushed.

Their fists which could bisect the ocean met.

Their battle partially destroyed the 8th Left Wing of the palace in an instant.

Rubble collapsed and turned to powder, dispersed by the evening wind, as the two clashed.

The trees on the opposite side of the palace quivered from the shockwave.

In this Little Garden where Gods and Deities gathered, the intense and aggressive battle of the newcomers created sparks in their collisions.

Trampling over ancient ruins, they were God-sent children of the new age who erased the countless accumulated achievements beneath them. A glory which surpasses the brightness of a star would bless them at the end of battle.

This Garden of the Gods which had long since stagnated starved for a new brilliance.

They competed for supremacy, the new age would begin now—

"…"

Unknowingly, they were advancing toward ruin.

Interlude 2

—[Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames] At the lowest levels of the Palace, within the Sea of Stars.

In the depths of the Palace that seemed like the Underworld with its jet-black darkness, devoid of all light and sound, something had suddenly raised its neck to be curved like a sickle. With just the movement of its body, the many metal chains that restrained it started to clank together noisily.

However, it wasn't given any more freedom to move further than that.

The metal chains had been coiled around the four limbs and riveted through each of them while the body was wedged in the crack of the wall. The metal chains were so tightly fastened around it that they dug into the flesh. So long as the body twitched, it would have caused excruciating pain.

However, that sort of thing was minor in comparison.

Having been sealed in this place and lain quietly without moving for two hundred years, it has finally felt the heat of the intense battle above ground today.

Sniff sniff —there exists the fragrance of war and havoc and it revealed its fangs to give a ferocious grin.

Although it was difficult to discern due to the pile that was driven from the top of the skull bone to exit through the lower jaw, that expression was undeniably a grin.

Be it in pain or happiness, freedom or being restrained, those wouldn't be the reason for its torture. For the only feeling under the Sun that this criminal's soul can understand—-is the rampaging heat of battle amidst the hellish battlefields.

Before the dawn of the Little Garden's era—when the Heaven and Earth of the world had just been born not too long ago, during the time that many gods and deities were sweeping into the world, many unlawful disasters that mirrored the opposite of their symbol of peace had scattered across the lands.

Heaven and Earth, Day and Night, Good and Evil, Prosperity and Decrepitude, from the crucible that brings forth all creations and destructions of the world, being boiled and filtrated to form the first of the disasters.

—This world co-exists with disaster.

—This curse exists with three thousand worlds.

You, still wishing for evil and sworn to be the incarnation of your wishes.

It was the one who expands the realms of Hell to encompass and devour the entire Human world and was none other than the tyrant who crushed hundreds of countries and thousands of heroes.

The people who were giving out that aura of domineering spirit above ground were also most likely carrying that same big ambition as they threw themselves into the battle. Then the destiny that appears before this tyrant would only be that—

The day that the seal would be undone was close.

Happily relishing the fragrance of blood and iron in the turmoil of war, it had the premonition that the time for the seals to be undone was near.

"……"

It would be very soon that the people within [Kouen City] understand—

The origins and meaning behind its title of [Natural Disaster], and…

Who it was to have first raised the emblem that swears 'not to live under the same sky with his enemy'.

The proud and overconfident newcomers will also have a taste for themselves as the doors of Hell's furnace will be opened.

Rampaging during the dawn of the Age of Gods—the True Horrors of a Demon Lord.

Chapter 3

—[Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames] The practice area in front of the Palace Third Right Wing.

Kasukabe Yō was the first to notice the pieces of paper that seemed to have blanketed the entire night sky. The highly sensitive Yō had immediately lifted her head to witness the changes in the sky.

Possessing the sight of an eagle, Yō had instantly read the contents on the pieces of paper and shouted towards the stationed troops and the main force gathered in the practice grounds:

“Quick! Get Ready! The Demon Lords are coming!”

“What did you say?!”

“Look up! There! Those are black [Geass Rolls]!”

Hearing Yō’s shout, the stationed troops started to shout as well.

But those shouts weren’t due to a loss of their calm. Being part of [Salamandra], which acts as one of the protectors of the North, their actions upon knowing the

news of the imminent attack of the Demon Lords had sped up.

Mandra took to the alarm bell tower and started to sound the bell forcefully to alert the others about the changes in the situation.

“All men to your posts! Start the operation as planned! ”

“But, Mandra-sama! What do we do about the sectors that we have not prepared?!”

“This is just a normal routine[31]! When it comes to a fight with Demon Lords, to be able to get half of our defenses up is already a blessing! Just follow the flow of the Game situation and improvise the rest!”

Responding to Mandra’s shout, the stationed troops moved out as one.

This battle was already considerably advantageous for them for they held the advantage of their terrain familiarity. Compared to the fights with Demon Lords in the lower levels at their lairs or in an environment

demonically transformed into a gruesome and hellish location, having a defensive battle on their familiar home ground is definitely a plus point for them.

Just then, soldiers stationed at the Outer Walls of [Kouen City] flew into the practice grounds while panting heavily.

"I'm a messenger from the outpost! There have been a huge horde of what seems to be the Titan Race spotted outside the City!"

"The Titan Race? From which region?"

"From their appearance, they should be the Titans from the Celtic mythologies! According to the latest estimations, their numbers have already exceeded a thousand!"

Hearing the reply from the messenger, one of the old-timers who was knocked away by Izayoi's punch earlier— the hundred armed Titan peeled back his lips to reveal his fangs.

"Celtic Mythology……The Titans of the Fomorians side? Setting aside their intellect for now, their physical bodies are really huge in proportions and it would be

really disadvantageous for us to have a direct confrontation."

Just happening to overhear his voiced out thoughts, Yō had nodded in agreement as she gave her suggestion:

"Then let's have the large sized Fire Dragon Squad to form the defensive frontlines. With the flying type fire dragons working with Pest to attack from the skies, it would be possible to wipe many of the enemies out in a one fell swoop."

"Nn. That is the safest measure. Jin, go to the Fifth Right Wing of the Palace to hide it out."

"Got it. Pest, please take care as well."

With that, Pest whipped up a black wind around herself to fly to the City fringes.

The old timer from the Titan race, who had heard the conversation beside him, had frowned in displeasure.

However, he was definitely not just the old foggy that he was known to be on the exterior for he soon understood their reason for doing so.

"That Former Demon Lord Young lady with a venomous tongue…… is said to be the rumored Black Death plague, am I right? Although it sure doesn't go well with my liking, she's truly the best choice in the match-up. She would be able to cause quite a severe blow to the Celtic Mythological Titan Race right?"

"You know of it too?"

"Of course. We are the [Hekatonkheires] faction that controls the Titan Race of the North. The times that we have fought against those guys wouldn't be enough to be counted with the fingers of both my ……no. Wait, the number of hands I have can go up to a hundred. See?"

As he spoke, the area around him had suddenly erupted many thick and well corded arms that were materialized from his spiritual power. Although the suddenness of the situation had taken Yō by surprise, her eyes had immediately taken on a sparkle of interest as she asked in enthusiasm:

"Oji-san, are you a type of Eudemon? From the Titan race?"

"Ah, I'm not sure about that. Seems like a déjà vu, for I recall someone asking me that same type of question…… but I guess I can be counted as a Eudemon?"

The Titan stroked the beard on his chin as he answered in a vague fashion. However, that answer was already sufficient for Yō.

Forcefully grabbing the hand of the other person, she gave it a shake—

"Let's do the self-introductions later. So, please be my friend!"

It was the old-timer Titan's turn to widen his eyes as he stared at her.

Originally wanting to ask further into the meaning behind that action, his thoughts were interrupted by a roar.

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

The both of them lifted their heads sharply at the sound that seemed closer than before.

It was clearly from a location close to the Palace. The mental conditions of the participants were instantly thrown into turmoil as they speculated about the enemies' ability to break through the districts to infiltrate to this area.

"The Titan race have already infiltrated to the heart of the city……"

"How can that be? No matter how you think of it, isn't that too fast?! What are the troops stationed at the Outer Walls doing?!"

"The large sized Fired Dragon Squad and your riders, please join the battle immediately!"

The humanoid Lesser dragons[32] sat astride the saddles strapped on the flying-type Fire Dragons and gripped the reins tightly as they entered their combat ready positions.

Once the Titans start to rampage in the grounds of the Palace, it would be the end of their strategies.

While swiping away the cold sweat that came from their shaken courage, they continued to refocus their concentrations to form their battle formations in anticipation for the imminent engagement in battle.

And amongst them, only one person—Willa the Ignis Fatuus had a grasp of the current situation.

"Maxwell…!"

The urgency in her voice would never have led people to link it to the usual klutz, Willa.

And perhaps having heard her low mutter, the bonfire in the Palace rose higher with a flare that seemed to be in response to her call.

The fiery violent winds that scattered the jet-black pieces of paper seemed to have its own consciousness as it started to swirl and narrow into a funnel. And that was the form of Maxwell's [Astral Gate].

The fiery vortex transformed into a huge twister that rampaged in the Palace. Finally, a figure appeared on the opposite side of the blaze and gave a snap of the fingers.

"Summon, Phrase Gate!"

The theatrical voice stole the heat from the blaze in an instant and encased it in ice.

The frozen flame storm was similar to the imitation of the fight between Willa and Asuka. The figure within the ice pillar gave another sinister laugh before snapping his fingers once more. Following the shattering of the ice pillar, the person made his appearance before them.

Donning a jacket of a red and blue striking contrast, he had landed before Willa with an expression of bliss.

"Hoho, you have finally called my name. Have you had a change of heart? Do you plan to accept me, my lovely bride?"

"You are noisy, stalker."

Willa used her Azure flames to repel the right hand that was trying to touch her blue hair. However, Maxwell fearlessly broke through the Azure flames to touch her blue hair.

Even though he was a Demon who controlled the boundaries of heat, this type of Azure flames were

flames that were able to burn through the walls of all creations— the Flames of Death; hence, Maxwell's right hand was instantly burnt and charred.

Knowing first-hand about the firepower of the [Ignis Fatuus], Yō had held her breath at the Maxwell's stunt that defied common sense.

(*To actually put his hand into Willa's flames with no hesitation……*)

If it were any other, they would have their entire bodies burnt to crisp. Although Maxwell had successfully blocked the burns from traveling to his whole body, it should still be an intense pain that would have caused people to faint.

But Maxwell's expression wasn't pained in the slightest.

The feeling that could be seen from his dreamy eyes could only be said as that —the bliss of having touched the hair of his beloved.

"Ahh… Finally… I've finally obtained the power to make the contact. In order to obtain this power, I've traveled to the ends of time for this. I've always prayed

for a long time to allow my infatuation to cross over the boundaries of worlds so as to get to your side—Willa! I'm finally here to fetch you!"

"Disgusting."

The terse reply could be said to be a clear rejection but when it came to Maxwell, this would only be seen as her way of hiding her embarrassment. Maxwell did not display any sign of taking offense as he moved his face closer to try kiss the blue hair within his grasp.

Yō who had been stumped by the exchanges of the two before her had then returned to her senses and she recognized the danger in the situation.

"You, You Stalker!"

Whipping up a shimmering whirlwind, Yō made a straight charge towards Maxwell's chest.

Although he had already been prepared for counter attacks from the enemies, Maxwell, who was infatuated

by Willa, was still sent flying into the passageways of the Palace by a kick that sank deeply into the back of his waist.

Similarly, the stationed troops from [Salamandra], who were surprised audience not too long ago, had launched their pursuit and subsequent attacks.

"Now. Use this time! Let's attack as one!"

Under the shouted command, the Lesser Dragons who wielded spears and the Salamander army started to fire their fiery bullets.

The fiery bullets that were around the size of fists were pelting in a shower towards Maxwell who had been kicked into the Palace; subsequently, the pillars and roof of the Palace were instantly reduced to rubble to fall atop Maxwell's head.

Mandra who had rushed down from the top of the alarm bell tower had joined the troops on the ground as he shouted:

"Do not let up on the fire! Let's finish him at one go!"

The stationed troops gave enthusiastic cries in response as they continued to raise their firepower.

However, Yō gave a loud shout as she suddenly recalled the contents in the [Geass Roll]:

“This is bad! The males must not act rashly!”

“What did you say?!”

Mandra who had given the command, asked in surprise.

The changes soon became apparent with many of the stationed troops, who were shooting their fiery bullets amidst their belligerent roars of enthusiasm, falling to their knees one after another as they started to sweat heavily.

“What’s happening to us…… strength is leaving us……”

“Tch! Even though it’s clearly a one in a million chance that had just been presented before us……”

The Lesser dragon stationed troops and the Salamanders started to fall sporadically in their fatigue. Recognizing that this is part of the curse in the Game rules, Yō and Mandra gritted their teeth while holding back their rising anxiety to read the [Geass Roll].

"This is a curse of fatigue…… Ugh, I wouldn't have thought that it would set in this fast!"

Mandra bit his lip in his anxiety.

But it wasn't time for them to expend their precious combat strength yet. The battle has just begun and the Titan Race were also launching their attack from the Outer walls. Mandra bitterly commanded the troops to retreat.

Having been showered with fiery bullets, clouds of smoke and dust erupted from the collapsed Palace passageway. Moreover from Maxwell's position when it landed, it would seem that he did not avoid the collapse and should be buried in the rubble.

Everyone was breathlessly watching the pile of rubble as they focused their attention on any possible movements from Maxwell.

Seemingly like an attempt to break the tense atmosphere, Willa muttered softly:

"……As I thought, it's still not enough. Totally ineffective."

"What?" Mandra turned to look at Willa but her words were proven in the next moment.

A silhouette of a person wavered in the clouds of smoke. Seemingly unaffected and calm, Maxwell had made his way into the Practice Grounds while giving his jacket a casual flick as he took a look around him.

"Can't be…… It was really useless?"

The stationed troops gave a desperate and hopeless sigh.

Maxwell patted the dust off his jacket as he made his displeased announcement:

"Arara, looks like there are really lots of obstructing objects that like to interrupt our exchange of affection…

…Hoho, I've always felt that the barbarian tribes were in excess, but seems like it is convenient enough to use them to kill off the spectators!"

The drunkenness of Maxwell's infatuation receded from his eyes.

It was clear that this Demon had become serious.

Releasing a fiery storm from his right hand and churning up a blizzard on his left, the portal between [warmth] and [cold] was split open, and a huge horde of the Titans started to appear within the Palace grounds.

They who were disassembled into small particles before being transported over, were now being reconstructed by Maxwell's power. Upon their complete materialization, the Titans gave a ferocious roar.

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

The huge battle axe fell in conjunction with the roar as the Titan swung it downwards.

Yō emitted a shimmering whirlwind in an attempt to shield the palace. But the large sized Fire Dragons of [Salamandra] were faster in reacting.

Using their scales that were harder than steel to block the battle axe, they released a stream of fire from their mouths to return the favor to the Titans.

「GEEEEYAAAAAAAaaaaaa

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

The fire dragons and the Titans collided with their strong spirits.

Having realized the inevitability of the stream of heat shot towards itself, the Titan pushed forth to deliver an uppercut to the lower jaw of the Fire Dragon. The hot ray that formed a straight line lit the night skies ablaze with a scarlet hue.

Seemingly in empathy, the other Fire Dragons had also picked up the howls of that Fire Dragon.

The Fire Dragons, who had battled with Yō earlier, and the old timers in the Practice grounds had also entered their stance in preparation for the imminent engagement.

"Human little girl! Although I hate to admit it, you are really strong! We can only hope for you guys to defeat the enemy's main force!"

"We will be responsible for the opening of the path. Leave the Titans here to us!"

"Mhm. But please be careful. The Dragon-types should also be under the curse of fatigue."

"Wahaha, so what if we are? Even if we're under the curse of fatigue, we won't be losing to some Titan bumpkins! You too little girl, don't go messing it up!"

The Fire Dragons gave a hearty laugh as they flew to join the fray.

Mandra was also astride on the back of a Fire Dragon as he entrusted the battle to Yō and Willa.

"Whether we win this fight, will be up to you two. May the two of you return victorious in battle."

"Mhm, we will show you our victory."

After encouraging each other, Mandra and the Fire Dragon charged towards the Titans.

The initial skirmishes had ended. And there was still odds for victory. The two of them stood confidently before Maxwell.

It was then that Maxwell finally snapped out of his intoxicating infatuation to note the presence of Yō whom he smiled to admiringly.

“Willa, is this girl your new partner? Looks like you finally grew tired of that pumpkin head.”

“No that’s not it. Yō is my new friend. Together, we… …will defeat you, Maxwell.”

Hearing that declaration, Yō couldn’t help but tremble in excitement.

During the war strategizing, Izayoi had given the battle pairing of Maxwell to Yō.

He said—You will be the one to defeat [Demon Lord Maxwell].

(*……Can I really defeat a Demon Lord……?*)

Till date, Kasukabe Yō had no experience with fighting against a Demon Lord.

During the [Black Pest] saga, she had contracted the disease of Black Death and was bedridden.

And during the Game of the Huge Dragon, although she had triumphed over a strong foe, it was mainly a stroke of luck that sealed the victory.

This direct confrontation with a Demon Lord would be a first for her.

"Uu……!"

Due to the tension from the butterflies in her stomach, she could not harness any strength in her body. Just then, the 8th Left Wing of the Palace was blasted apart. Not knowing what had happened, the people in the Palace turned to look at the direction of the 8th Left Wing of the Palace.

The two Human figures that flitted out of the blown apart Palace were stepping upon the rubble they had created to engage in what seemed to be a melee at light speed.

The vibrations of their punches seemed to tremble the very atmosphere and every punch launched would be accompanied with a thunderous sound of an explosion.

Gazing at this spectacle, the Lesser Dragons were abuzz with their speculations.

"Are those guys……really monsters?"

It could be said as an epitome of a battle between a God and a Demon.

This was a battle that was waged like a violent storm which was astounding enough to steal the breaths of the Lesser Dragons and demonic species who were monsters themselves.

If people on par with a Demon Lord were to give their utmost effort in the fight, the collateral damages to the surroundings would also be of an unusually large scale. The grass of the courtyard were whipped up into the sky

and the trees on the ground were also smashed into smithereens.

—Can Kasukabe Yō also fight with the Demon Lord in that fashion?

Facing Yō who was already sweating in her palms, Willa gave a smile.

"It will be fine. Even if things happen to go awry…… I will defeat Maxwell alone."

Seemingly an attempt to materialize that will of hers, she spurted flames from her hands to create a searing wind of Azure flames.

[Ignis Fatuus]—the wind that was summoned from the boundaries of life and death which could burn anything that existed in the world as a material form. Even if the target was the Demon materialization of a concept, it would not be of an exception.

Actually, if one were to ask about the possibility of winning—[Demon Lord Maxwell] is a Demon that has its existence rejected by science in the first place.

A demon that has its existence rejected is equivalent to a paper tiger for it is a fictional hyperactive imagination that would disappear once it is torn to bits and tossed aside. He was one of the few Demons that could be defeated through the use of physical attacks. Originally of the rank of a low class wandering spirit, Maxwell had been bestowed a strong spiritual attainment due to some unknown reasons.

Willa whose hands emitted the [Ignis Fatuus], turned to Yō to make her last confirmation.

“I will take the first part of the battle, the rest of the battle will then follow as per our plans!”

With that, Willa’s figure disappeared.

It wasn’t a high speed movement or a common old trick of deceiving the senses. Neither was it a congenital ability bestowed upon an individual. It was just the Gift of the key of unlocking portals that was given to people who controlled the boundaries.

This was the strongest technique of opening an [Astral Gate] to access a different time stream of a different dimension before making a jump back into the same timeline—aka [teleportation].

“Summon, Ignis Fatuus—!”

Appearing behind Maxwell, Willa swung down the Azure Flames in her hands towards him. If her opponent wasn’t Maxwell, this strike would have sealed her victory.

However, Maxwell, who had predicted the attack, gave a ferocious grin that bared his canines before vanishing his figure to appear above Willa. Using both hands to shoot out a barrage of ice shards and flames. After continuing this attack and defense maneuver for three more rounds, the both of them simultaneously launched a Hissatsu Waza[33].

“Hahaha, it is getting unbearably hot in here! To use the Flames that steals all as the first strike sure is an honor! Do you love me to the point of being yandere[34]?!”

"How disgusting."

"But it's the same with me! I love you as well, my Bride of Azure Flames!"

"……Really disgusting."

Although the distastefulness of the opponent almost caused Willa to abandon her will to fight, she continued to focus her energies to meet the charge.

But Yō, who stood at the side to observe the battle, had not done the same for herself. Unable to find a way to get herself involved with their instantaneous strikes and defensive blocks, she could only stand at her original location in a daze.

(*As I thought…… the lone leaps do not have any precursors …*)[35]

In respect to Yō's fighting style that depended heavily on the sensitivity of the five senses, the exchanges between these two were of a completely different level.

Be it sight, hearing and smell, having high sensitivity for those wouldn't mean a thing to this sort of battle.

In fact it would be easier to say that the more one relied on these senses, the more disadvantageous this battle would be for them. For Yō to enter the fray between these two, she would have to steel her heart and toss aside the most dependable weapons she had used up till date.

If only I have a day to test it out before employing it in combat— Yō finally managed to suppress that weak part of herself that voiced out that thought.

(*No, that's not right. Mandra had also said this. When it comes to a battle with Demon Lords, this sort of thing is only a normal routine.*)

Being unprepared is only to be expected.

Even though that was the case, everyone had still gathered up courage to challenge the Demon Lords.

(*Believe in myself! If Izayoi and Asuka are able to do battle, I will also be able to do it!*)

He will be defeated by you. You can do it.

Choosing to belief in Izayoi's words, Yō gripped her [Genome Tree]

“[Genome Tree]— [Marchosias] form…..!!!”[36]

Chapter 4

Part 1

—[Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames], Tablet of the Sea of Stars, Corridor of Displays.

The city region was already steeped in chaos. Unlike the stationed troops of [Salamandra], the civilians had not been mentally prepared to take on the fight with the Demon Lords. Suffering the curse of fatigue that was sprung on them without any warning, they could only tolerate the unjust treatment as they battled against the Titan Race.

In the center of the Large sized Fire Dragon formation that battled the oncoming horde of the Titans, Kudou Asuka sat astride the back of the Mountain Goat Divine Beast—Almathea, as she defeated the Titans one after another while suffering the discomfort of riding bareback .

“Strike them down, DEEN!”

“DEEEeeeEEEN!!!”

Deen gave a loud roar while it charged towards the Titan warrior. Grabbing the head of the opponent with an arm, it swung it down to meet the ground. Although the Corridor of Displays were already in a mess of shattered glass, now was not the time to think about that stuff; hence, assuming that the precious displays would already be removed to safer locations ahead of this fight, Asuka and Deen worked together to put down the Titans in succession. As for Jack and Laius, who had been tasked with the responsibility of protecting the city, they were watching the progress of Deen.

"Yahohohoho! Looks like we did a good job, didn't we ?!"

"……Hmph. That's because Deen's original structure had been too simplistic. It only took some understanding on the uses of the Sacred Rare Metal to achieve that sort of versatility."

Said Jack who was beaming with happiness and a Laius who pulled a long face as he replied.

The two had not only bestowed the Flames of the Dragon's horn to Deen. The strongest weapon upgrade given to this Red Iron Giant Soldier was actually the

large increase in the power from utilizing the whole body .

Up till now, Deen had always used its Gift of stretch-ability from the Sacred Rare Iron to move its body . To put it bluntly, it would just be a lump of iron muscles.

Hence Jack and Laius added gears and pistons into that hollow interior to help bring out the full potential of Deen's Gift of stretch-ability; consequently, Deen has obtained an upgrade in its explosive force and the mobility to make more fine-tuned movements.

"Tch…… As I thought, giving it to the [No Name]s is just a waste. If it were left to me, I would have made stronger reinforcements to it."

"HouHou? How so?"

"I would first apply a coating of the Adamantium, which is bestowed the Gift of Hades, on the surface of the armor to give it invisibility; subsequently, I would give it the power of flight to allow the huge body to take to the skies. It would surely be a spectacular sight indeed ."

"……Hm, Well that… Laius? Even if that huge body were to be invisible, it would still cause the ground to tremble due to the heavy footsteps and it would be exposed then, wouldn't it? Moreover, even if you do not add the ability of flight to it, wouldn't it be easy for Deen to reach aerial enemies by boosting its size?"

Completely without practical uses—Jack calmly retorted.

Instantly, the expression of Laius, who had been very confident when he said those words, was changed to that of displeasure as he turned his head away.

However, Asuka who sat astride the back of the Mountain Goat Divine Beast Almathea had overheard their conversation and muttered a comment in her interest.

"……but doesn't it sound interesting to have those functions? What do you think, Almathea?"

{"Master, Smith Jack is right on that. Although it doesn't seem useless at first, the strong would also have a method to deal with invisible enemies."}

"But a Deen that can fly in the skies would surely be impressive!"

{"……"}

Is that so? Although the Mountain Goat Divine Beast was really doubtful about that, she wasn't that oblivious to just trample across those feelings in her master's currently sparkling eyes. She was a mountain goat who knew how to read the mood.

The Greek gods were also one of the few famous Problem Children Groups in the various Group of Gods. However, there were also some Divine Beasts amongst them who have a good personality and a conscience, which is this Dual Horned Mountain Goat—-Almathea. Those Dual horns of hers possessed the Gift of abundance and if she were to transform into her Human form, she would be a jaw-dropping beautiful Goddess. She was a Divine Beast of the highest tiers who possessed both grace and beauty.

"Okay, it's time to move to the next location, Alma."

Asuka tugged on the reins and Alma bolted across the roofs of the Corridor of Displays with her leaps. Asuka

and Alma made another visual confirmation that the Titans in their current location had been clear and were pondering about moving on to the next location.

Just then, the Fire Dragons who were battling the Titans were giving out desperate cries of agony that sporadically sounded from the city regions.

“GEEEEEEEYAAAAAaaaaaa！”

That was a roar that was much higher in octave than the usual. If it were others who did not understand it, they would have thought it to be a yowl of the brave fighters. But the Divine Beast Alma was able to accurately pin point the meaning behind those yowls.

{“Master, that yowl just now was a cry of agony. And it would seem that the situation is quite desperate.”

“Is that so? Do you know the location?”

“Yes. And because it is straight ahead, I will ask of you to hold on tightly to the reins.”

Alma stated a fair warning and Asuka frantically tightened her grip on the reins as she leaned her body forward.

With the clopping of hooves, Almathea raised her speed to soar leisurely across the high roofs that seemed to tower above them like the peaks of mountains with her great leaps. As Asuka was wearing the protective shoes inscribed with the symbol of Vayu that Yō had used before to break the strong wind that was rushing towards her. Galloping at a speed that was unthinkable for a Mountain Goat, the duo had reached the scene where they could see a Fire Dragon bleeding profusely as its wings were torn.

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

"Ku~….. Just a mere Titan, how can it be that I've lost?!"

"Be careful! These guys seem a little strange! It might even be possible that they were bestowed with some sort of Gift!"

Hearing the words of the Fire Dragons, Almathea had given the Titans a glance in confirmation.

Their eyes were bloodshot and glinting with a strange light from under those masks and a sinister atmosphere was cloaked around them. Although the Titans were by

no means a kind and gentle Eudemon breed, but this was already close to the realms of being a demonic beast or a demon itself.

And Asuka could recognize this dramatic change in them.

“Could it be…… demonification?”

Almathea lifted her head in surprise as she replied.

{“Yes, that’s it. You are right, my master. That is the Vampirification. The Titans have been demonified by the Vampirification process!”}

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

The Titan lifted his huge battle axe to chop it down toward its new target—Asuka.

And it was stopped by Deen who came from the side to send the Titan flying.

「DEEEEeeeEEEEN

The iron fist had struck the side of the head with a twisting action and the Titan’s body was sent sailing

through the air. But the unbelievable part was the ability of that demonified Titan who could use the momentum of the force to convert it into a somersault as it launched a chop towards Deen in that revolution.

Using the centrifugal force to chop the arm upwards, the Titan managed to cause the huge body to wobble slightly, even though it was unable to destroy Deen who was made out of Sacred Rare Iron.

Deen swung the right fist down to slam on the head of the Titan.

「DEEEEeeeEEEEN

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

The Titan who was punched a few times by Deen continued to put up a fight with the battle axe. This attack and counterattack continued for over twenty-four rounds before the demonified Titan finally lost its consciousness.

In a mere span of three minutes, the Corridor of Displays had been transformed into a pile of rubble and Asuka had been watching the whole fight from the start to the end.

But that was not all. The demonified Titans were still coming through from the outer walls.

"What a surprising amount of vitality. If it were just one or two, it would be still manageable, but if these demonified Titans were to come in waves one after another……!"

{"It would seem that the enemy has a pureblood vampire in their possession. With the demonification of these huge Titans, the Fire Dragons would be at a disadvantage when they confront them directly right?"}

Hearing Almathea's calm assessment of the situation, Asuka tightened her grip on the reins.

"…… You mean we should join the battle too?"

{"No, just allowing Deen to provide support will be enough. I do not believe that there's only one demonified Titan in their ranks. We will have to look at the bigger picture here—to get rid of the primary targets which make up the main force of the enemy!"}

With the echo of her clopping hooves, Alma suddenly took off from their original position. Shortly after, the

position that they had been moments before was struck by a wave of heat. The bricks on the roof were melted and the corridor exploded to send the molten bits scattering in all directions.

In the suddenness of the acceleration, Asuka had almost fallen off her stead but she was still able to regain her seat while keeping a firm hold on the reins as she used her legs to steady herself. The attacker's shadow was cast over them as they continued to pursue them persistently.

From the sounds of the flapping wings, Asuka realized the identity of their attacker.

"He's here…… The Black Gryphon!"

{"That's not all! There's another in front of us!"}

Asuka hurriedly focused her eyes on the target that approached from the front. The figure of a person wearing a robe with the "混"character had just jumped out from the shadows of a tall chimney. Although the appearance couldn't be seen due the long robes that covered the body up to the head, it was definitely the Demon Lord of Confusion.

Almathea, who had accelerated not too long ago, judged that the distance between them would be too close to start her deceleration for making a turn; hence, she made the decision to charge straight into the path of the figure that wore the robe with the "混"character. And to prepare for the collision, she stepped up on the speed. The Demon Lord of Confusion parted his lips in a smile from under the folds of the hooded robe as he leap aside to give way to them. At the same time, he used his hands to release a hot wave of heat towards them while laughing loudly.

(*Ku……It's not possible to dodge…!*)

With them galloping at full speed, an attack from the back would be impossible to dodge.

Graiya who had been launching his attack from above had also aimed for that opportunity to spit another wave of heat at them.

「GEYAAAAaaaa

Simultaneously, Graiya gave a loud cry as he fired his intense attack with exhilaration; consequently, the two balls of intense flames had shot towards the two running figures.

The seven houses in the area below them had completely been vaporized and the ground was also bombarded into the air, resulting in a reddish smoke that rose from the ground which was not unlike a volcanic crater at this point.

It was undoubtedly a direct hit.

The Demon Lord of Confusion leap into the sky to give two spins of triumph while the "混"character fluttered in the wind.

Landing on the back of Graiya after his complete somersaults, he gave a triumphant laugh.

"Fufu, hey, young urn, your technique in cornering others was a job well-done. The angle of the attacks and the way you chased them was really one of a kind too."

"…… Being called a young urn by that kind of voice sure doesn't sit well with me."

Graiya retorted as he gave a harrumph in displeasure.[37]

But Graiya's words were not wrong as well.

The voice of Demon Lord of Confusion at this point was far from the voice of an ape spirit but was the voice of a young girl that was as crisp as the chimes of silver bells. Being called a young urn by this sort of voice would surely be an insult that made his anger justifiable.

Giving his neck a twist[38] in his discomfort, Graiya spread his wings to take to the skies.

"I heard that this is the person who made Aura retreat the other time and I didn't expect her to be this fragile to be so easily done in with just some low-end strategy. It seems like I've given it too much thought."

"—No? I think you might have underestimated her?"

Demon Lord of Confusion left those words to Graiya before jumping off with a despicable fit of laughter.

Following that, a sudden attack from Almathea who streaked pass in an intense lightning bolt narrowly missed his wing.

"Nu?!"

"Ku… It was dodged……"

{"It just shows that you haven't aimed properly, my master. Please do reflect upon your actions."}

Almathea had stated it plainly but it carried a hint of blame in her advice to Asuka as she leapt to the adjacent roof. On the other hand, Asuka had pouted her lips in defiance.

However, this leisurely conversation was not joined by Graiya, whose wing had narrowly survived the attack and was unable to bring himself to take things at that leisurely pace; hence, Graiya turned his angry stare towards Asuka and Almathea.

"You are actually not hurt from that firepower……?"

"Mhm. Mhm. Mah, I've guessed that this would happen already. That level of attack would only be

deflected by that mountain goat I guess……. Fu Fu, you' d better tighten your belt my young urn. Although I'm not clear on the full potential of that young lady, I would say that the defense of that mountain goat is definitely a Ten out of Ten. To say that the Greek Gods existence is all due to the accomplishments of that Mountain goat might not be an exaggeration too. She's also quite good at developing talented individuals."

The Demon Lord of Confusion gave a fair piece of warning to Graiya that contained much profound meaning between the lines.

And if he were to start feeling afraid from merely hearing the mention of the Greek Gods involvement, it would have been an insult to the title of the Gryphons.

The black body started to tremble and Graiya gave an angry roar.

"The Mountain Goat Divine Beast that belongs to the Greek mythologies…… I see. So she's Almathea from the constellation of Capricorn! To be able to meet an enemy of a celestial beast status in this [City of Brilliant Flames] sure is an honor! Please allow me to unravel your genome to be incorporated into my flesh and blood!"[39]

The curved talons of the eagle and the hind legs of the lion started to tremble violently as they underwent a transformation to form the wrists of a Dragon.

The [Genome Tree] carved upon Graiya's chest gave off a strange sinister light that constantly changed in its radiance. The dual wings divided into four and was constructed to take on a different shape. Graiya had transformed into a Black Dragon and a red glint could be seen shining from the huge eyes of his, which he had focused upon Asuka and Almathea, who stood before him, to release a ray of light.

{"We will be taking off immediately! Please hold tight!"}

"I… Got it!"

Asuka grabbed the reins while hugging the back of Almathea tightly. Graiya, who had just completed his transformation into a Black Dragon, emitted a ray which was much different in radiance from the previous heat attacks, and it struck the corridor. The corridor that had been struck by the direct ray was not destroyed but was blanketed with an eerie silence. Following that was a dramatic change in the environment.

The red bricks that paved the corridors were instantly transformed into grey rock.

“Gift of Petrification……!?”

Almathea squinted her eyes to scrutinize the body appearance from its head to the tail.

{“The Eye of Petrification that is possessed by the Cockatrice[40]. Although I don’t know what kind of Gift he holds, but it seems like he’s able to use the Gifts of other Species…… Mhm. This is just as well.”}

“Eh?”

{“This is great news, my Master. As a form of accumulating experience, this is one of the best teaching materials that can be prepared for you. If I were to suggest the way to go about this, try to bait him into showing all his abilities in the battle and counter all of them. When you succeed, you will definitely become an outstanding Eudemon-Exterminator!”}

“Wha….No. It isn’t the time to talk about these kind of things right?! Moreover, there are also other enemies—“

"Fuahahahaha! It's just like you said, my young ladies!"

The cute voice that did not seem to match the despicable style of laughing floated over to them as the figure with the "混"character soared across the night skies.

Moving at a speed faster than Almathea's galloping speed and leaving afterimages in his tracks, he had inserted himself between the two of them in a flash and he followed it up with a thrust of a fist with that petite girl-like body to strike towards Asuka.

Asuka's physical body was no different from an ordinary girl.

At this speed and distance, if the strike were to land, her bones would definitely be shattered.

To prevent that from happening, a Pumpkin Head dressed in rags intervened between the two of them.

"Ara, let's stop this here!"

Appearing from the Pumpkin colored Gift Card were seven lighted lamps that moved to attack the Demon Lord of Confusion.

Being hit by the sneak attack, Demon Lord of Confusion used the head of Almathea as his spring board to make a somersault in mid-air. But that was still insufficient to get him away from the attack and his long robes were burnt away.

"……Yaho?"

Jack was so surprised that his eyes quivered in their sockets, and the Demon Lord of Confusion did not let that opportunity pass him.

Adjusting his form in mid-air and pulling away some distance from them, he started to laugh cheerfully.

Even Asuka, who had been narrowly attacked a moment ago, couldn't help but to draw a sharp breath after witnessing the appearance of the Demon Lord of Confusion.

"……This…… What joke are you trying to pull, Sandra-sama?"

She asked with that quivering voice of hers. But that didn't mean that Asuka had not guessed the reason, and it was just that she wanted to repress those worst case imaginary scenarios that she had by muttering those words.

The one who appeared from under the covers of the "混"character— the one with red hair and donned with golden accessories, the girl who wore the specially tailored clothes that had the emblem of the [Salamandra]'s Fire Dragon.

She was none other than the leader of [Salamandra], Sandra Doltrake.

"Yahoho……Could… Could it be that you have used a transformation technique to appear like Sandra-sama……?"

"Oi, Oi. Are you blind or what? Is there no eyeballs in those sockets of yours, pumpkin head—Ah ah, you really don't have any eyeballs! But even if you use those hollow eyes of yours to see, you should also recognize immediately whose body and spiritual power it belongs to right? I'm the youngest and least honored girl, who has been given the most unfortunate fate of the world, to

take the position as a [Floor Master]! The new leader of [Salamandra]—Sandra-sama!”

Giving a fierce smile that didn’t seem to be the usual Sandra, the Demon Lord of Confusion removed his hairpins. Rather than calling that action as one that was feminine, it was more accurate to describe it as the bold action of a warrior drawing his sword.

This wasn’t just a manipulation of the mind. Her body was now injected with an entirely different soul. And anyone could have been sure about that.

The hollowed eye sockets of Jack was lit with a silent anger, but he managed to ask calmly.

“Possession of an opponent…… Demon Lord of Confusion, is that your Game?”

“Fufu, well, you are close but you’ve not hit the bull’s eye.”

“……stop beating around the bush. No matter how it is, Sandra-sama is still the [Floor Master]. A normal Gift would never be able to forcefully take over her body—You have used it right? The [Authority of Host Master]!”

The suppressed anger had finally leaked out and Jack's words were rude near the end.

Standing akimbo, the Demon Lord of Confusion then retrieved the banner of the "混"character from his Gift Card to raise it while making his declaration.

"You've quite a good eye on that, but there's an unfortunate piece of news for you guys. The one who can participate in the Game of this 'Great Me' here is only limited to one! Currently the participant is only Sandra ojou-chan alone! Furthermore, the most problematic thing is that the one who can read the [Geass Roll] is also Sandra ojou-chan, herself!"

"What did you say?!"

That's absurd, Asuka voiced it loudly. That was something that couldn't even be called a Game. But the reality was that there was nothing that could be called a [Geass Roll] being held in the hands of the Demon Lord of Confusion.

The Demon Lord of Confusion gave a fierce smile as he scratched his hair as he looked down up on the three individuals before him.

"It's just great that this young girl is so lonely. Although she really wanted to depend on her family, she was unable to do so. Although she wanted the trust of her comrades, she was unable to get the trust. And then to be betrayed by the two whom she had thought of as her important friends, abandoned…… Fufu, His Highness and Rin ojou-chan were really overboard with that! Having fulfilled these conditions, it was just simple for this 'Great Me' to use the [Authority of Host Master]! The pitiful soul that have been forced to carry the burden of all these confusions in reality— have already been devoured by me, the Demon Lord of Confusion!"

The Demon Lord of Confusion flapped the banner around while laughing to the point of having stitches where he couldn't help clutching his sides.

Having heard the entire speech, Asuka's fist had begun to tremble from the anger that coursed through her.

……To prevent any misunderstanding, it might be good to make this clear now– Asuka and Sandra had no deep connections or relations with each other. It was just the level of being acquaintances who greeted each other when they met a few times.

However, if what the Demon Lord of Confusion said was true, the loneliness that Sandra felt would have been the same as that which Asuka once had. Or even of a higher degree of it. Even so, Sandra had never allowed herself to present such a side to her and had stood before everyone else as the [Floor Master].

That was her stubbornness, her pride and the entirety of her courage. Asuka could never forgive the Demon Lord before her who despicably laughed while trampling over these attributes under foot.

Taking out her Gift card, Asuka took a step forward

But surprisingly, Jack stopped her with his right hand.

"Asuka-san…… I understand your feelings. But for this…… just leave it to me, Jack to deal with him."

The pumpkin head was covered with flames of anger as it continued to bobble as he requested for Asuka to step back.

"Jack……"

Asuka also knew better than to insist on it as she took a step back.

—It was well known that Jack loved kids. A Demon who loved children and was loved by them in return. It was needless to say that the person who was fuming the most would be this Pumpkin Gentleman.

The hollowed out eyes were lighted with a boiling anger and Jack posed a question like the last attempt at negotiation: “Demon Lord of Confusion…… You have trampled upon the pure soul of a child. Don’t you even feel a slightest bit of remorse or reprimand from your conscience?”

In regard to that question, Demon Lord of Confusion wiped off his smile to reply angrily:

“The reprimands of the conscience? Ha, what a huge misunderstanding you have there! The one who forced this young lady to this state was never the ‘Great Me’! But it was the people of this Confusing world that had forced her to that dead end! And you still dare to question the conscience of the ‘Great Me’?[41] What a fine joke you have there!”

Demon Lord of Confusion threw the banner with the "混"character over his shoulders and transformed it into his new battle equipments.

The golden accessories and the red outfit were dyed black and the "混"character appeared upon the chest and back.

"The 'Great Me' will always follow the path of Evil! Demon Lords are the opposing existences of Law and Order. We are the scourge born to the world! Hence those who are born Saints or Demon Lords are different from those rogues of Kouryuu and the other small fries! It is to ensure the progress of the world in the correct direction that the absolute evil is needed to balance the scales in the world! The 'Great Me' takes pride in this character of "混"! Being a member of the ones who carry the burden as the scourge of the world, I refuse to see living my life by my motto as anything disgraceful!!"

There is nothing to be ashamed in my life—that was the roar from the Demon Lord of Confusion. He then stared at Asuka and the others while emitting a fiery aura around himself that flowed from the Dragon Horns of Sandra.

It was then that Asuka realized that she had been underestimating the enemy before her.

[*This enemy……is also a Demon Lord!*]

The Shinigami Pest who swore to take revenge on the Sun.

Leticia who had been pushed to the point of despair by her comrades and resorted to committing a massacre.

Similar to the both of them, they were all people who had understood the evilness of their acts when they abused their Authority to become a tyrant. Betting their souls and everything of their existence to formulate the Rules(Game Rules), possessing a power to force the world to obey the rules and becoming the King to awaken others to the cruel reality.

"…… 'follow the path of Evil'. Is that your entirety and source of spiritual attainment?"

"That's right. A Demon Lord is to be determined and unshakeable in his belief. And that will be the Oudou[42] that I, the King of Confusion will always uphold till the day of judgement."

Hearing that reply, Jack's spiritual status started to undergo a dramatic change.

"You have forced my hand!! Demon Lord of Confusion! You have done it before the banner of [Will-O'-Wisp]—the most sinful crime that you should not have—!"

Purgatory flames poured out of the Hollow Pumpkin head.

That was an agitated shout that was much more intense than an eruption from an active volcano.

For [Will-O'-Wisp] which has always functioned upon the motto of protecting young souls as a Guardian organization, this Demon Lord would be an enemy that necessitate a judgement.

"Burn away every single drop of spiritual power to completely overwhelm the enemy's Oudou!"

"O' Demon Lord of Confusion, accept this with everything you have! This is my Trial…… [Pumpkin the Crown]—!!!"

Following the eruption of Purgatory flames from the Crown of the Pumpkin, it exploded apart.

The fragments then transformed into shining and glowing pieces of parchment that scattered across the various corners in the Corridor of Displays.

<<Gift Game Name: Jack the Monster>>

·Participating Requirements::

·A person who have killed or hurt a child before;
:

·A person who used children to perform evil deeds.:

·Participant: Demon Lord of Confusion (Permitted to kill anyone who obstructs the Game):

·Game Leader: Jack the Ripper:

·Winning Conditions::

***Defeat the Host- [Pumpkin the Crown];**

***Unravel the mystery behind 'Jack' by understanding the historical events.**

·Defeat Conditions::

***Participant is killed by the Game Leader and hence being defeated;:**

***When the Game leader exposes part of his true identity, the Participants will lose their strength till the point of being defeated.**

Oath: The legality of this Trial is assured as long as it is implemented on a participant who has fulfilled the Participating Requirements.

"[St. Peter] Stamp"

As Jack scattered the glowing pieces of parchment, the expressions of everyone present were distorted in consternation.

"Jack…… can use the [Authority of Host Master]?!"

Asuka's surprise was only natural. For the [Authority of Host Master] mentioned here is a powerful authority of enforcement that surpasses any Gift bestowed by the Gods. In addition, it is the symbol of a Demon Lord that allows the unreasonable demand of others to participate in a Game.

Standing in the centre of the raging Purgatory Flames that had flowed out from the Pumpkin head, Jack finally took on the figure of a human. A scarlet leather jacket and messy blond hair that looked like that of a wild beast .

A blood stained blade was held in a backhand grip while his eyes were filled with a murderous intent sufficient to kill with just the focus of the gaze.

"……Ugh!"

That was no longer the Jack she knew. This was definitely not the same Pumpkin Gentleman who would give a cheerful laugh whenever and wherever he goes to.

Seemingly like the crazy killer as recorded in the [Geass Roll], his gaze was so sharp that they would have pierced the depths of an abyss. Even Asuka who had been born in the Showa era had heard of that name.

"Jack the Ripper"——The serial killer in the year of 1888 who shocked the whole of England.

But no one knew of the ending to that story right?

There was no way it could have been known.

—This crazy killer had also committed a similar heinous crime in the distant past, or even a massacre that

was far worse than what was mentioned earlier. No one knows of his lies to a Saint, and having obtained this second chance at life.

And no one would have known what kind of causation might have linked them to be called by the same name.

"It's time for a' killing… Let's dance, O' Demon Lord of Confusion—!"

Jack's shout was filled with anger and murderous intent.

Forming a swirling fire from beneath the heels of his leather boots to construct a spring, Jack instantly leapt towards the open chest of the Demon Lord of Confusion

And plunged the blood stained blade towards the chest of the Demon Lord of Confusion.

Part 2

—[Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames] The practice area in front of the Palace Third Right Wing.

The [Genome Tree] that started the transformation process gave off a bright dazzling light that surrounded Yō's legs. The tips of the footgear were as sharp as the protruding claws of a wild beast while the materialized armor seemed to be adorned with the fur of a Gryphon.

Being equipped with the new equipment that was created through the mimicking of Eudemon abilities, Yō took to the skies.

The punch that she had shot into an empty spot had suddenly resulted in a spray of blood.

"……What?"

Maxwell gave a surprised mutter as he appeared above Willa's head. The strike that Yō had thrown at the empty spot had been deeply buried into the back of Maxwell's waist.

(*This works!*)

The strike that landed successfully had released the tension that Yō had been feeling up till then.

On the other hand, Maxwell was staring at Yō in a daze due to the unexpected sneak attack that had took him by surprise. It was supposedly impossible for anyone to come between the fight of Willa and Maxwell who were moving instantaneously. But Yō's strike had made contact to his body and shook him to the core causing him a fatal injury that he had never experienced before.

Maxwell quickly followed Willa's movements to perform another dimensional leap and when he materialized in the empty spot—

"—this isn't right."

Maxwell tried to change his line of thought for it was a little different from the sequence of events. Following up with an attack after his materialization is supposedly impossible or that should have been the case—

For at the same time that Maxwell materialized from in that empty spot, he had been struck by the attack from Yō.

"Willa!"

"Got it!"

They shouted to each other as they begin to follow up their attacks on Maxwell. Drawing out a hand crafted staff, Willa thrust the sharp tip towards Maxwell's abdomen while channelling the [Ignis Fatuus] from within.

Using the claws and blades from her equipped armor and wings, Yō ripped through the clothes and flesh of Maxwell's neck.

Beheaded and incinerated by the Azure flames, the red and blue colored jacket and his internal organs had been incinerated instantly and disappeared with the rise of the pillar of fire.

Yō hugged Willa while staying aloft in the air, not moving her eyes at the pile that was his remains for even a moment.

—we won?

Though she had just asked herself that question, she also shook her head to answer it for herself.

"Willa. This might just be out of our calculations."

"I agree…… it's quite a problem. I didn't expect for him to become that strong."

There was a tinge of anxiety in their voices but this was only understandable.

Maxwell was supposed to be beheaded and have his ashes dispersed by the pillar of fire that incinerated him. But he now stood within the pillar of fire leisurely as the burnt head and other parts of his body started to reattach themselves.

"According to what others have said, I thought that he's supposed to be vulnerable to physical attacks and be defeated in that way……but if that last move of ours were to be ineffective, there's no way for us to beat him at this point."

"Mhm. It's a headache. It really is a headache-inducing problem."

The two of them were very calm on the exterior due to their personalities but internally, they were very anxious.

If it were the case of a specific method to defeat him just like those of the God-slaying methods, they were not

well-versed on the topic to expose Maxwell's spiritual source. Whether the two of them were enough to hold out against him with their current firepower was also another problem.

Continuing the fight in this manner would just be an uphill battle that would gradually become worse for them and just when anxiety was beginning to take hold of their hearts…

The figure of Maxwell disappeared.

"Nu, I won't let you succeed!"

Yō tossed Willa into the air while kicking the right hand of Maxwell that attacked from below. Using the sparkling whirlwind to negate the blizzard released by Maxwell's left hand, Yō flew higher into the air to pull away from him.

"Willa! Tactical retreat for now! Bring me along with your teleportation!"

"That, That can't be done."

"Hah?!"

"If I want to bring a live person along with me in the dimensional leap, you would die if I close off the doorway."[43]

Yō was speechless at that reply.

She did not expect to learn of that fact only at this important juncture. Having no other plans, Yō could only dodge the continuous attacks, which came from Maxwell who chained his dimensional leaps, while thinking up another battle strategy.[44]

On the other hand, Maxwell was already starting to see through the Gift that Yō was using to continuously dodge his attacks.

(*This little girl can perfectly deal with my dimensional leaps and keep up a defensive battle. This…… I see. It's the same Gift as that guy!*)

It was something that happened three years ago when Maxwell had happily appeared before Willa to pick her up, but that man had used the same power to push him into a tight spot.

Maxwell had been brimming with confidence when he entered Little Garden but having been defeated by that real and overwhelming power of that man, he could only run away then.

“Previously, it was the tactical retreat after being confronted with an unknown power yet……Hoho, but I’ ve now guessed the workings of it. This time, I will be sure to see the workings of this Gift completely!”

Seeming like an attempt to put some distance between them, he performed a dimensional leap to the back where he dispelled the endless emissions of flames and snow from his hands. For the Demon Maxwell who controlled heat, flames and snow were far from his true powers.

Compressing and extracting the heat to use it as energy. That is the sort of idea that made the foundation of ‘Maxwell Demon’’s existence.

“With just me alone, I’m not that strong a Demon Lord ; hence to fill that weakness of mine, I’ve had someone create this thing for me— Summon, Coppelia[45] Sister!”

Pak With the snap of his fingers, a spiral shaped [Astral Gate] opened.

Just like the summoning with the Titans, the practice grounds were awash with the violent eddies of heat and sleet while many girl-like dolls appeared amidst the storm to surround Yō and Willa.

The dolls, which were modeled after females while possessing transparent pupils and platinum white hair, were continuously summoned to the practice grounds.

Though they were lined up neatly, their movements were exhibited much dexterity and did not seem to belong to dolls as they lifted the hems of their skirts in a curtsey. Although their eyes were lifeless, the skin of the dolls were flushed and seemed to have the heat of blood flowing within them.[46]

“Co…..Coppelia……”

“Their appearances are quite appealing right? These are the results of a certain [Third kind of Perpetual Motion Machine] that was sealed by someone three years ago. Feeling that it’s a waste to leave it sealed up, I’ve gotten others to help mass produce them. Although they

are still in the prototype stages, they are still valuable experiment materials—- so let's get this going and have a dance, [Coppelia Sister]s!"

Maxwell gave his command.

The summoned platinum white haired dolls rushed towards Yō and Willa in a wave as they waved their wicked looking blades while stepping lightly in a dance like footwork while the various blades hidden on their bodies were flashing out in succession.

While dodging the blades hidden between their fingernails, wrists, elbows and hems of their skirts, Yō also launched her own kicks at them which easily shattered the dolls with the enhanced strength from the collective genes of the Eudemons.

(*Individually, they weren't strong, but their numbers are great!*)

And the worst part was their lithe and rapid movements.

Willa was engaged in her teleportation guerrilla tactics but melee has never been her speciality and her dodging movements were awkward with the lack of practice. It

was just the girlish action of jumping back in panic while releasing a handful of Azure flames in retaliation.

Even so, the two of them were barely managing to meet the onslaught of the dolls. Although they were outnumbered, the difference between their strengths were levels apart. Willa and Yō kept up a constant pace of destroying the dolls with the respective firepower of Azure flames and sparkling winds.

However, the rate of summoning is clearly much faster than their rate of destruction.

In the time that they took to destroy twenty dolls, thirty more had already been summoned.

“We will be overwhelmed by the numbers if this continues……Willa!”

“Wha,What?”

“I will be the decoy! Take this time to use your biggest firepower to blow up this practice grounds, okay?”

The bold battle strategy caused Willa to widen her eyes.

The soldiers who were battling in the vicinity had also chorused with, “What did you say?!”, “Don’t Joke around!” and “Oi! What kind of joke is that?!”, as they piled comments of displeasure one upon another in protest. However, they were all ignored by the two.

Willa understood that Yō had the ‘Fire Rat’ leather lamellar armor to protect herself. Realizing that this was a strategy that had taken the backup defense system into account, Willa nodded her head in agreement.

“……Ten sec…No. Just get me five seconds to be readied!”

“Got it!”

The [Genome Tree] shone blindingly as it constructed more blades of higher durability. The agility of Yō’s reactions as she charged towards the main bulk of the dolls had also increased.

Using a sparkling wall of wind to deflect the dolls that pounced over from all directions, while effectively dismembering those that managed to pass through the defense. She then prioritized on destroying the dolls that were summoned closest to her without allowing them to make a single move.

Be it from above or below, left or right and all corners of the directions in addition to the dimensional leaps that can be chained, Yō unleashed her blades to mow down her enemies without a blind spot within her reach.

(*It's just as I thought! This reaction time cannot be the result of responding with the five senses! She clearly…… knows what will happen in the next second!*)

Maxwell who was watching over the battle from above had already seen through the Gift that she wielded. In the situation where all her opponents were surrounding her, moving in response to the information received from the five senses would have been much more restrictive.

(*I'm afraid that the Gift she's using might actually be the power of premonition! And it should be a continuous casting type that can be used in a limited radius! For the sneak attacks from behind to be noticed, it shows that she's using her senses and hearing to obtain information a few seconds in advance!*)

Then, how many times can she cast it in a chain? How many seconds would be the limit of her premonition?

To discover the answers to those questions, Maxwell summoned yet another fifty dolls.

Within the five seconds before Willa started the summoning of a large scale [Ignis Fatuus],—at the third second, the equipment on Yō's legs were swapped out with the sparkling armor of the Pegasus.

"Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!"

Yō roared with all her might as she used her power to release a huge sparkling whirlwind. The reinforced sparkling whirlwind became an iron wall that protected the two of them from the attacks that came from all directions.

But understanding the basis of that action, Maxwell started to smile.

(*I've seen though the trick! Three seconds—That's her limit!*)

The [Coppelia Sisters] that he had invested as the fighting force had totaled a hundred and twenty-two.

But with that sacrifice, Maxwell was able to fully grasp the ability of Yō. This young Demon Lord having been humiliated three years ago had now learnt to be humble and calm when analyzing the abilities of the enemy.

(*At the instance when the [Ignis Fatuus] of Willa's summoning ends, I can summon twice the number of the fighting force. And when it becomes a confusion in the battle grounds, I will get rid of that girl when she reaches her time limit! So go ahead, summon the [Ignis Fatuus]! O'Bride of the Azure Flames!*)

Having meticulously plotted the factors for the setting of his stage, Maxwell took off his jacket while allowing himself to be intoxicated in the thoughts of victory.

Willa raised her hand crafted staff up high as she opened the portal.

"Summon, [Ignis Fatuus]—!"

An Azure wind picked up above the ground.

The searing heat caused temperatures in the region to sky rocket and it incinerated all the [Coppelia Sisters], which surrounded Yō and Willa, to crisp as it shot up into the sky. During this time, Maxwell retrieved a [Geass Roll] that shone with a dark light in preparation for his next move.

(*Willa……I can finally get you to join my Gift Game of courtship!*)

Shortly after, the blaze had diminished in intensity and the jet-black charred surface of the Practice Grounds started to be visible.

As the heat rose from the ground, the moisture from the evaporated grounds made it difficult to make out any figures within the vapor, obscuring the both of them from view.

Maxwell had a face full of trepidation and happiness as he observed the scene.

But no matter how long he waited, the two figures never appeared on the grounds.

"……Willa?"

Maxwell's mouth was hanging agape as he looked down upon the Practice Grounds.

After the vapor had dissipated, his beloved person did not appear.

His arms hung down lifelessly as he stood in mid-air in a daze.

The current Maxwell was full of openings to be exploited and this is not a metaphoric expression. Even the soldiers would be able to behead him in this current state.

From being intoxicated to a state of daze, and regaining his bearings once more, Maxwell crushed the [Geass Roll] in his hands.

"Willa……Aaaaaaaah, WILLA! Willa, Willa, Willaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhh! UUuuAAAAAAAAAAAAA leeeaaaaaaaaaaa! URIRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaa! Where have you goneeeeeeaaaahhhhh!"

After three years of rumination, the [Geass Roll] that he had injected all his feelings of love had been totally ignored. Using both his hands to grab his hair in frustration, Maxwell gave an unworldly roar.

The echoes of the roar continued to reverberate in the Palace for a full three minutes.

Abruptly stopping the shouts and returning to his calm self, Maxwell coolly shrugged his shoulders.

"—Mah, this sort of thing is also possible. I guess I will just listen to the next instruction from the "Tactician(Game maker)"-sama. Hoho, what a shy bride she is."

Maxwell Demon Lord threw his jacket over his shoulders and disappeared.

On the other hand, Yō and Willa had flown to the blind spot of their enemy, hiding in the Forth Right Wing of the Palace. After Yō, who wore the 'Fire Rat' leather lamellar armor, had confirmed the disappearance of Maxwell's presence, she then let out a sigh of relief.

"It's over now. Come, it's okay now, Willa."

"……Sniff, Uu….."

Willa started to sob in the embrace of Yō's arms.

Somewhat troubled by the turn of events, Yō stroked the head of Willa while thinking in admiration 'Uwa~ Though she's obviously petite in size, her huge racks are really surprising', while feeling healed by the sensation of those ample breasts.

"Sniff… Uu…It was really scary, really disgusting!"

"Mhm, yeah. That was really disgusting."

Although Yō had never been a target of a stalker, she was able to empathize with that level of disgust. It was physiologically unacceptable.

"We must also rest and regroup. Moreover, it seems that he's not interested in anything that does not concern Willa. So thank you for your hard work, let's rest a bit for now."

"Mhm Yō……Thank you."

Willa dried her tears as she sat down.

Even though it couldn't be called a victory, it was still a success in stalling the Demon Lord.

In regards to that achievement, Yō was confident.

[*The current me can now fight when matched against a Demon Lord. I'm no longer a burden in fights.*]

—But, just this once had already made her exhausted. If she were to continue fighting in this condition, she could only see an imminent defeat for herself.

Drawing out her Gift Card, Yō materialized a twig of the Water Tree to replenish her bodily fluids as she made preparations for the next battle.

Part 3

— [Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames], [Tablet of the Sea of Stars], Corridor of Displays.

Having ripped off his Pumpkin mask, he who transformed into [Jack the Ripper] had deeply plunged the dagger into the chest of the Demon Lord of Confusion. Sandra's body was then stained by her blood

as a result. Currently, he is no longer Jack the clown but a cold-blooded murderer. Since there isn't any way to rescue her, he would not show any mercy even if his opponent were to be using Sandra's body.

Jack's dagger pierced into the chest of Sandra—

"—Don't underestimate others, you newbie!!"

Suddenly feeling something amiss, Jack quickly retreated back to his previous spot.

Although it was still unconfirmed about what had just happened, the Demon Lord of Confusion must have used a certain spell. And the evidence was evident when the reeled scroll of "—"[47] was unfurled in the hands of the Demon Lord of Confusion.

Not doubting his proficiency in sensing a killer's strike , Jack was confident that he had dodged the enemy's technique.

(*But, that's not a Gift for attacking!*)

Confirming that his body is fine, Jack launched into his second strike without a shred of hesitation. The Demon Lord of Confusion had to lean his upper torso backwards to dodge Jack's dagger.

(*Damn it! This guy's fast!*)

That speed had far exceeded the standards of normal. The dexterity of Jack's Hissatsu waza was even able to surprise the Demon Lord of Confusion who had been able to make Izayoi have a run for his money.

Faced with such a strong foe that was out of his calculations, the Demon Lord of Confusion twitched the corners of his cute lips into a smile:

"You're quite good yourself! To actually obtain an [Authority of Host Master] that have been signed by a Great Saint?! My, I really didn't expect the real identity behind [Jack the Ripper] to be that of an executioner!"

"Yes. That's right. And you, the criminal who snookered and devoured the young, shall meet your end! Right here, right now!"

The blood-stained dagger was engulfed in flames as it made a slashing movement to make a sweeping slice along an elongated vertical plane to cut the peak of the tower that the Demon Lord of Confusion had stood upon in an extended line. If that strike had landed, it would no doubt cause a fatal wound.

(*Tch! …..Reinforcing one's own [Authority of Host Master] through revelations of the spiritual source?!*)

A Gift Game held in a duel format that metes out punishment to a particular sinner——Demon Lord of Confusion had deduced that to be the case.

—Although the [Authority of Host Master] is well known for its association with the Demon Lords, only some would know that the basis of its existence is actually the opposite.

A Trial for meting out justice to Criminals;

A Trial for proving one's Devotion to a belief;

A Trial for welcoming new evolutionary Changes.

The forceful authorities that are made to bestow these Well-intentioned Trials—saying that is the real nature of the [Authority of Host Master] would not be a far cry at all.

Due to the guarantee of the Gods and or Religion that the Game abides by the rules and is of a well-intentioned purpose, Jack is able to be spared from the branding as a Demon Lord.

However, in the case that Jack hosts the Game out of his own selfish desires and not for the purpose of meeting out judgement to the sinner, he would immediately be branded with the mark of a Demon Lord and hunted down by the religion that assured his good behavior.

(*But, that's not all! That guy's actually able to induce a small scale [Paradigm Shift], which shows that his spiritual source is definitely not a weak or normal one!*)

The mystery surrounding the identity of the Game Leader had been used as the core of the Game and it simultaneously possessed rules to reinforce Jack's power.

The coupling of the high dexterity from those flame springs and the dagger made a dangerous pair as it enabled Jack to instantaneously travel up to twice the speed of that capable by the Demon Lord of Confusion.

Even so, the Demon Lord of Confusion gave a relaxed laugh.

"This is interesting……!! It's been a few hundred years since I've been warmly received by a Human's Game! Ah ,aah, let's dance! Let's dance together! But when the curtains fall, it will be sufficient to have only the 'Great Me' standing upon the stage!"

Responding to Sandra, the Dragon Horn emitted a glow. Raising his right hand above his head, the Demon Lord of Confusion created many a hundred large fireballs in the sky.

Although Sandra is young, she was definitely not a push-over. Her body had inherited the purest blood from the bloodlines of the Strongest Class. Just purely on firepower, her strength was one of the top few in the Five Digit Regions and it was now possessed by the old and experienced Demon Lord.

Bringing to bear many hundred fireballs that hung and almost covered the gloomy skies, the Demon Lord of Confusion roared:

"It's now! Graiya! Take them!"

「GEYAAAAAaaa

Jack who had been chasing the Demon Lord of Confusion hurriedly turned to look behind him as Graiya glided in the air to come up from behind.

Graiya, with his abdomen lit with a glow of stored flames, and the Demon Lord of Confusion launched a pincer attack on Jack as one.

Seeing this, Asuka griped the reins as she shouted her command.

"Alma, protect Jack!"

Alma, who changed into a bolt of lightning, arrived under Jack before transforming once more into an Iron-clad fortress, and although the hot ray of Graiya and the many hundreds of large fireballs rained down upon it, the sturdy fortress constructed by Almathea continued to shield Asuka and Jack without being bulged.

Protected within the Adamantium fortress, Asuka gazed at the humanoid Jack while muttering in a doubtful and bewildered tone.

"Is this Jack's…… true form?"

"……That's right. Asuka-san, this form that is drenched in blood is my true form."

The dagger soaked in fresh blood.

The bright red leather jacket that is used to hide the traces of blood.

A messy head of hair and the gaze that seemed to ooze with the murderous intent of a Shinigami.

All those characteristics effectively created the atmosphere unique to a serial killer.

"There's a continuation to the legends of Jack the Pumpkin. The blood-stained criminal who had been granted a second life and the young demon who saved him—the fates of these two were supposed to be eliminated and erased……but a kind and generous Saint had given me a second chance to change my ways."

Jack's task is to protect the young and to search for and rescue souls that have been born from unnatural deaths. Having set his heart to turn over a new leaf, Jack had played the role of the Pumpkin clown and became the main character for Halloween.

And that's how Jack, whose name had been synonymous to terror and monsters, had taken on the association to a clown to live on.

"…… But you know… The one we want to make an alliance with is Jack the Gentleman and definitely not a murderer. Am I right, Jack?"

"Yes. I know that. To have concealed my identity up till now, I offer my deepest apologies."

"That's right. Then after this, you'd better make sure to change back into that Pumpkin head. Otherwise, Lily and the others from the senior children group will be afraid of you."

Giving a smile that seemed to blossom across her face like any normal day, Asuka raised her Gift Card.

Jack was stumped and was unable to say anything to that.

Even after knowing the past of the other, it would not change the fact that they were fighting as comrades in arms. And those were the words said by the honest gaze from Asuka.

"……Yahoho. Mhm. Of course. If I use this look to say 'Trick or Treat', children would surely be scared to the verge of tears. I guess I should just spare myself from those situations."

"That's right. The pumpkin head really looks many times better than the current you."

Yahoho, Jack gave a laugh that was a much deeper tone than the usual.

He also seemed to be a little shy and it is definitely not an illusion.

"Okay……It's our turn to do this, Alma! Let's go beat those rude little baddies!"

{"Understood. My master."}

Almathea reverted from her fortress form to her mountain goat form while Asuka retrieved four

Gemstone orbs from her Gift Card which she then proceeded to inject with her Speech.

" 'Float like the Clouds, Shower like a hailstorm, and Rampage wildly like a bolt of thunder—

O'Mountain Goat who runs in the skies, I beseech thee to transform into a formless fortress to mete justice upon thy enemies.'

"*—Go, Almathea!*"[48]

The words of Asuka had caused the gemstone orbs to have mock Divinities residing within them.

Her God's bestowment (Speech) is a reinforcing Gift but if it were to be used in its current form, they would shatter instantly; hence, these four gemstone orbs were given to Almathea to crush between her teeth, where they would be absorbed as Gifts.

In an instant, the spiritual status of Almathea started to bloat enormously.

(*Asuka-san…… Finally she's going to use that.*)

Almathea, who had just ingested the four Mock Divinities, started to release fierce sparks of electricity that ran along her woolly body and she gave a loud bellow. The Iron body had also started to melt from the heat and gradually turned into a fluid that seemed like Mercury.

Almathea—Her real identity is the Goddess of Harvest who nurtured the main God of the Greek mythologies. Her horn is able to bless fertile soils and bring forth much fruit for harvest, and her woolen hide is covered by a layer of Adamantium; hence, she is able to become the Strongest Shield of the Greek Gods that can defend from any attacks—[Shield of Aegis][49].

Jack had used the combination of Adamantium on Almathea to create a mock [Aegis Shield]. But the method to activate this Shield would require an indispensable Gift. And that would be the Divinity from the Heavens.

Like the clouds, hail and thunder that protects her master to mete justice upon the enemies.

[Shield of Aegis] is still a symbol of power for Zeus, God of the skies.

(*To make up for that shortcoming, Asuka-san had used the method of injecting Mock Divinity into those four orbs to be given to Almathea. And if this works……*)

Having her former Divinity returned to her, Almathea gave a loud bellow.

Stomping her hooves that ran with rivulets of energy that coursed throughout her body, she waited for the orders from her master.

{"Please give the next order, my master."}

"The order's been given already. Just like the clouds that float in the skies, the hail that rains down upon the lands and the thunder that strikes in a pronged fork—Almathea!"

The sound of an explosion came shortly as the air around her underwent a rapid thermal expansion.

Following the explosion, fresh blood had also spurted out from the chest of Graiya.

Almathea who had moved with a sonic boom had pierced Graiya's chest like an arrow. The speed was completely incomparable to that of before and it could be said to be the epitome of a lightning fast strike that sparked as it struck its target.

"Gu, uh—!!"

As Graiya toppled backwards from the momentum of the horn that pierced his right chest, the two beasts fell in a straight line to crash through the structures within the Corridor of Displays and all the way into the Commercial Districts, causing them to collapse along the way.

However, this opportunity was not let up by the Demon Lord of Confusion as he immediately launched a fireball towards Asuka who stood without her usual protectors.

"You're full of loopholes, ojou-chan!"

"Ara, A maiden's defense is really sturdy you know?"

— *Hing Ling* The sound of the flute that had suddenly appeared in Asuka's hands from nowhere

resonated in the air. Perhaps it was a customized version of a flute for a simple movement of the wrist had already been able to generate the sound from the flute.

But the problem was not with that movement.

Seeming to have heard this sound, Almathea had traveled at light speed to protect Asuka.

(*Guh, that's fast!*)

Coming down like a torrential rain of scatter shots, she had transformed into an Iron Wall of defense. As for Graiya, who had been knocked away with her just a little while earlier, he was still kneeling over the rubble as he gripped the right of his chest to staunch the flow of blood . It really is an incredible speed.

(*Tch! This girl also possess some problematic tricks as well huh……?*)

The Demon Lord of Confusion had a cunning glint in his eyes, which was really unimaginable to have come from a young girl, as he assessed the situation.

Although Jack was said to be a Sixth Digit person, he was in the possession of an [Authority of Host Master]

and in addition to that was Asuka who controlled The Fortress—Almathea. Graiya had also been severely injured and the enemies were still holding back on their hidden moves.

The situation sure is bleak.

He gave a shrug. “Although it is a pity, but I guess it’s about time. FuFu, it’s time for us to take our leaves.”

“…… Are you trying to run? As long as my [Authority of Host Master] is still activated, you will never be able to escape out of [Kouen City].”

Jack raised his dagger while lowering his hips into a crouch.

But the Demon Lord of Confusion only gave a leisurely smile as he retrieved another reel of scroll[50].

“What~’s the matter?! It’s just for us to regroup a little. Well, during that time, you will just have to make do with playing with the Titans!”

He unreeled the scroll and some Chinese characters floated from the surface.

虚—The curse that stops the sense of time within the radius of the caster.

Up to the point where their vision started to become a monochrome, Asuka and Jack were able to grasp the situation but it was only up to that point for the figure of the Demon Lord of Confusion had suddenly disappeared before their eyes.

“You must be joking? He really disappeared!”

{“Although it’s just for a moment, I’m sure that the characters of 虚 had appeared. I speculate that this must be the curse that controls the sense of time. And as long he has that card in his hand, we won’t be able to catch him”}

“But I’ve already activated the [Authority of Host Master] on him. If he attempts to flee the city—“

Just then, the sound of something collapsing from the outer wall section of the city echoed loudly.

The stationed troops along the City walls must have been breached.

Asuka and Jack gritted their teeth in frustration as they assessed the next step they should take.

"Let's go. If the Demonified Titans were to swamp in the City would be wasted even if we were to win the Game."

{"That's right. But what makes me worried is Smith Jack. If he continues to battle, he would also fall prey to the curse of fatigue and lose his strength right?"}

"Oh, Oh this…… It's nothing, don't worry! Due to a lot of reasons, this curse will not have any effect on me!"

{"Hm? Oh is that so? Then let's take action before it's too late."}

Asuka rode upon Almathea, who had changed back to her mountain goat form, as they hurried over to the breached Outer Walls.

But at this time, they should have noticed.

The Dragon Horn of the Dragon of the Sea of Stars that Sandra carries around had not once, been used by the Demon Lord of Confusion.

Chapter 5

Part 1

—[Kouen City, City of Brilliant Flames], Fifth Right Wing of the Palace.

The Fifth Right Wing of the Palace is located at the heart of the [Salamandra]'s Headquarters and it is the center point for the Palace that constituted twelve towers in total. All non-combatant personnel of the Palace had been evacuated to this tower to hide in the meantime. And as the female Palace attendants were worrying about the battles outside, Rin, who wore a long hooded robe to cover her face, walked purposefully towards the secret passage way hidden within this Palace

(*It's been two years of hard work to find the location of this place, I must not fail this.*)

Hidden within the folds of her clothes was the Dragon Horn of the Dragon of the Sea of Stars, which was taken from Sandra, carefully wrapped with an exquisite piece of cloth. Bringing along these two items, she made a beeline towards the interior of the Fifth Right Wing of the Palace.

(*The bronze statue that stands at the end of the Fifth Wing ……Found it!*)

Rin suppressed her urge to shout in joy for the efforts of her past two years would have gone down the drain if she were to be exposed here.

Glancing around to her left and right, she checked to confirm that nobody is in the vicinity.

Rin's heartbeat started to race as she made the descent along the spiraling stairs. The Gift that lay ahead could be said to be the most effective weapon against the Strongest Races.

And with this Gift, Rin and His Highness would be a step closer to their goal.

(*Because of the previous fiasco that made us return in defeat, His Highness is currently in a very unstable position. So no matter what happens, this Gift must make it back with us!*)

Waving aside the anxiety in her heart, she quickened her steps.

Although they had spent a great deal of combat strength in the previous battle, they were still unable to defeat any of the [Floor Master]s.

(*Being given the title of the Origin in acknowledgement for the accomplishment of defeating [Avalon], if it ends with a failure this time, the position of His Highness would definitely be taken away.*)

And the anxiety led her to increase her pace.

The winding stairs did not have any lighting and the old floorboards which were left unmaintained for a long time made the climb difficult. Holding a lantern which she had retrieved from her Gift Card in one hand, Rin continued to press on into the dark depths of the stairs.

After walking for twenty minutes or so, the spiraling stairs continued to extend downwards and she started making wild guesses regarding the depth that she had travelled thus far, but she soon shook the thought out of her head to continue onwards.

After another ten minutes, it finally widened into a Great Hall.

Within the Great Hall, which had the signage that read [Hall of the Sea of Stars], there stood five great doors and a piece of [Geass Roll].

『Name of Gift Game:—In the sea of stars dragon—[51]

Thou who traveleth far across the Sea of Stars, choose the door thou desires and present thy proof .

The first Door: Many stars were born from the initial star and more came into existence thereafter as they multiplied.

The second Door: The collisions between the Stars becomes the flesh and blood for the new Stars.

The third Door: The new generation that is soon to arrive will hail the season of spring amongst the Stars.

The fourth Door: As the stalks of rye sway in the vast lands of the Star, the Gods of the five grains will celebrate and offer their blessings.

The fifth Door: The pulsation within the Earth attracts the freshest water to welcome the era of prosperity.

O' Traveller who haveth come a long way across the Sea of Stars, two feelers are required as thy compass, crossing becomes impossible without.[52]

O' Traveller who haveth come a long way across the Sea of Stars, please reconsider thy actions with great deliberation.

Once the Map of the stars is unravelled, the Sea of Stars will be divided into three from its whole.

Wanting not the Star of Destruction to shine, so be tiedth here, the disaster, to be in a long slumber .

Only wishing an eternal sleep.[53]

[Dragon King of the Sea of Stars] Stamp』

"Uwa, that's so simple."

Having glanced through the contents of the [Geass Roll], Rin immediately chose the fifth Door. And walking from the entrance of the hall to the last door did not take too much time.

Along the way, there seemed to be a nagging sensation of a warding curse in the area but it was negated by the two horns of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars. If anyone were to be without those horns, there shouldn't be any way for someone to make it this far.

But how deep has she traveled, she wondered. Perhaps it might be directly below the huge mountain that towered behind the Palace too.

A platform was built at the end of the room that had a stand for the Horn of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars to be planted into with the accompanying Flag which would adorn it.

“At last, I’m here. With this, His Highness…….will not need to be killed.”

“—Rin, killed by whom?”

“Kya!” Rin gave an exclamation in surprise.

Having originally thought herself to be alone, she was surprised by the sudden voice that tried to strike a conversation with her.

Drawing her dagger, Rin interrogated the owner of the voice.

“…Jin, could it be that you’ve been following me this whole time?”[54]

"Mhm, but it is just out of coincidence. I kind of spotted you moving around in the Fifth Right Wing of the Palace and just shadowed you over. I did want to inform others at first….. But, I guess it will be useless for anyone to have a direct confrontation with you when you possess that sort of Gift."

"So you've come alone? Eh? Are you an idiot?"

Rin's voice had recovered its original tone as she exclaimed.

Jin seemed to have realized it as well as he scratched his head in a troubled manner while giving a laugh.

"But, the only reason for me to talk to you is because of this one-to-one setting! Well, if there were others around, I would have never initiated this conversation!"[55]

"…….conversation?"

The intentions of Jin were now out of her grasp and Rin, who was doubtful about the potential deception in his words, took a step closer.[56]

"Well, I guess His Highness has also been in your care the other day. Since it's just listening to you, I guess it will be a small request that I can grant. So, what do you want to talk about?"

"It's regarding the goals of His Highness and you."

—Rin abruptly stopped in her slow stalk towards Jin.

Noticing her response, Jin took it as a sign that he still had grounds to proceed with the negotiations.

"You've said it before that you and His Highness have started your activities in [Ouroboros] only two years ago right? At that time, I've already thought of this question. You and His Highness…… have basically joined the [Ouroboros] only two years ago right?"

"……why do you think that it is so?"

"It's a secret. But there had been clues. Amongst the comrades who have been stolen from us three years prior , one of them possessed a similar power. And that person had a similarity to His Highness……and the emblem of [Ouroboros] that have been split into three parts, if all those were to point towards the same cosmology, there would be faint connections that can be seen from them."

Jin replied with an expression of partial confidence and unconvinced manner. In fact, it could be said that seventy percent of this conjecture had been a replication of Izayoi's method of deduction and applying it on the spot, but it was not shown on the surface. Just that his back was soaked with cold sweat.

And the result of his actions was that Rin started to trust his words.

"……."

—Could it be that he really knows?

Rin gripped her dagger tighter as she grew suspicious.

"……you really are beating around the bush. Why not let's get it out in the open shall we? Although I may not seem like it, I'm actually quite busy you know?"

"Mhm, Sor, Sorry. Then, I shall state my conjecture bluntly. His Highness is working for a goal that is —-totally different from the organization of [Ouroboros]?"

"Hah—?"

"There should be at least two major factions that are present and backed by a structure built behind them in your organization. The first would be the faction that wiped out my faction three years ago and the second would be the faction led by you guys. Initially I thought that it might have been a change of leadership but if it were the case, it would have made the title of 'His Highness' sound strange. So that would mean that the current leader is still in power."

"!"

"So I've deduced that Rin and Maxwell, you guys are the private army under the command of His Highness and there are others in the organization who are higher in the hierarchy who are issuing the commands to you guys."

"…..What's this got to do with the previous conjecture of yours?"

"You should know full well don't you? After all, you've been following the side of His Highness from the get-go."

"Sorry, I really don't catch it. Could you make it plainer?"

The grip over the dagger's handle tightened further.

Recognizing that his beating around the bush method of conversing would spell the end of his life, Jin frantically explained:

"He, His Highness! Isn't, Isn't the type to follow under others. If there's someone sitting on the throne above him , he will definitely vie for it with all his might! Moreover — he's not the kind of person who would willingly place his life into the hands of others right?"

—Am I right? Jin tilted his head.

Rin was shaking her head in her heart in refutation.

His Highness is indeed not the sort to be suitable for battles orchestrated by another's control. That was a point that Rin could agree to but that is not the belief held by His Highness. He has only fought in battles while carrying the burdens of their expectations upon himself. Rin gave a bitter expression as she lowered her dagger while scratching her head in a troubled manner.

"……saying all that with such conviction but isn't it all speculation based on my self-mutterings earlier?"

"Mhm, it is. I had only just arrived at that conjecture with such confidence due to your words."

Jin then gave his usual undependable smile to cover it over. It was then that Rin finally realized.

This smile was actually a Poker face used to hide his real thoughts.

"……I don't like that kind of smile. Where did you pick that up?"

"It's from the person I've respected. Actually, that person often showed this pretentious slight smile on the surface……but the real expression is much crueler than anyone else."

"Hmph" Rin gave a listless response.

But for Rin, Jin's initiation of this conversation was a good thing as well.

(*The Origin Candidate and [Genome Tree]. Having these two as comrades would definitely be much more reassuring. Moreover, the [No Name]s have great ties with the [Floor Master]s.*)

Leaving aside [Salamandra] and [Onihime] Alliance for now, having the support and connections with Shiroyasha of [Thousand Eyes] and Kouryuu, who currently stands in as the Honorary Guest member, would definitely be a benefit.

Especially since the latter has the [Great Sage who Pacifies Heavens] Bull Demon King and [Great Sage who Leaves Heaven in Disarray] Roc Demon King as his relatives. Those two Demon Lord powerhouses, who were born with a congenital God-class spiritual power, also had a sizable population of Heralds and Beast devotees that cannot be ignored.

When things come down to a difference between a milliliter and a gram in the power levels, they would then become the strongest shield if they were willing to lend a hand.

"……I've a question."

"What?"

"The other time, we've failed in our mission and we cannot return empty handed. If I do not take this inheritance left behind by the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars…… I will require a substitute."

"Then, just take me."

The reply was immediate that Rin had trouble responding to it as quickly.

Jin placed a hand over his chest as he took a step forward.

"[Genier Contractor]— is a very rare Gift that can give commands to a Demon Lord without their ability to resist the control over them. In addition, you will be getting me, the leader of the [No Name]s who have been obstructing your plans all these while……Although it is incomparable to the inheritance of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars, this sort of accomplishment would surely allow you to escape the gallows right?"

"Are…Are you serious? You may be killed immediately when I bring you before them, you know?!"

"Yes, I've already mentally prepared myself for that possibility."

—Jin had already set his mind on it from the start.

If [No Name] were to be in trouble, he would put himself before the rest to protect them. This is the oath from his heart.

"Just take it that I'm begging you, Rin. Fabricate a reason to temporarily put a hold to this Game and kidnap me as a substitute. We can then set up a secret negotiation with Izayoi-san and the others, telling them about the terms of needing their help for the plans to overthrow the ones in power—That you will return my comrades, Flag and Name of my Community."

Jin quietly took a step closer while extending his hand towards her.

Looking at Rin directly and meeting her eyes with his honest gaze, he declared:

"Form an alliance with us. Then, we shall destroy the real Demon Lord Alliance with our own hands."

Part 2

Izayoi grabbed a piece of the crumbling Palace rubble to fling it towards His Highness. And His Highness swung his fist to send both the piece of rubble and Izayoi

flying back into the distance. But, both of them did not sustain any fatal wounds.

The both of them were in the possession of a power that far exceeded the capacity of Humans.

Their punches were packed with the force that would split the oceans, devastate mountains and valleys. Even so, they were still far from having a clear winner. In this sort of situation, if we had to name a candidate with the advantage—-then it can be said that the scales has tilted in the favor of Sakamaki Izayoi.

"Don't get ……too cocky!"

As though he were waiting for His Highness to follow up with the attacks, Izayoi leapt and smashed his knee into his opponent's forehead. Following the collapse of His Highness from the sudden attack, his white hair was gradually dyed red.

Although His Highness leaned back due to the impact, it was also more than that. He utilized his height to narrowly miss the follow-up kick that swept pass his face before jumping into the personal space of Izayoi to swing a punch with his right hand to strike the abdomen.

Izayoi coughed up some blood but his fighting spirit had not been dampened in the slightest.

Clasping his hands together and intertwining his fingers, he swung it down upon the back shaft of His Highness's head.

"Gah……!"

With a force that caused the ground to form a depression, His Highness's head had smashed into the ground. Not only was his forehead hurt and after receiving the heavy handed attack on the back shaft of his head, even if it were him he would inevitably be forced to kneel at least once.

In contrast, Izayoi was free of any fatal injuries despite panting heavily from the fight. Although the physical capabilities of the bodies were relatively similar on the appearance, but the first to tire out from the scuffle was His Highness. Izayoi initially thought that this is due to the advantage he had in his physical strength, but the situation seemed a little off at this point.

"……"

Wiping away the trickle of blood at the corner of his lips, Izayoi watched His Highness in surprise. The number of punches were equal and he did not feel any different in the powers of their fists.

Could it be that it is the difference between stamina?

(*No……It doesn't feel like that is the case.*)

Izayoi adjusted his breathing for he decided to ponder over it quietly.

But the laugh from His Highness interrupted Izayoi's thoughts.

"Haha……Sakamaki Izayoi, aren't you very calm here ? Even though you could have easily followed it up with another attack."

"……"

Izayoi did not reply but his restrain from continuing the fight was definitely unnatural.

Up till this point in time, Izayoi already had three chances to defeat His Highness. Not by the use of fists to

end it but by the usage of the dormant power in his body , which is the Gift of [Code Unknown].

If it were to be used, the pillar of light that could pass judgement upon the Gods and send the Huge Dragon into oblivion with a strike, this young lad should be defeated. But at every opportunity that Izayoi wanted to use it, there was an indescribable anxiety that would take root within his heart.

—Is it really okay for me to use it here?

This sort of intimidating pressure did not seem to come from this white haired lad with golden irises. It was a kind of insecurity that crept upon him from below his feet and surfacing in his thoughts from time to time to create a momentary opening between his attacks.

"I see. Your instincts are quite good. If you had used your trump card, I would also have to return the favor. In that situation, we might even cause the worst case scenario of destroying the seal of that fellow—you've also felt it right? The monster that sleeps within [Kouen City]."

"————————-!"

"If that fellow awakens, everything would be wasted. Currently, without Shiroyasha in the lower levels, no one would be able to stop him. And that includes me and you."

"……oh? That's quite a humble self-evaluation from you."

Izayoi gave a laugh as he taunted his opponent but he clearly understood it in his heart.

Ever since the start of the battle, there was an unthinkable amount of animosity that was surged from the depths of the ground. And according to Izayoi's instincts, he could tell that the animosity was directed towards himself and His Highness.

"Mah, I guess we can only stick to the simple fist brawl then. Looks like our powers are quite equal….No, although it's frustrating……but Sakamaki Izayoi, you are currently stronger than me."

"Yeah, if we continue to fight, it's an eighty or ninety percent chance for me to come out as the victor."

Izayoi slightly nodded as he confirmed the deduction with reality.

Despite the battle being able to drag on for a few more hours, the curtains of the fight were inevitably drawing to a close with Izayoi's victory.

His Highness also understood that fact but he leisurely shrugged his shoulders while shaking his head slowly.

"But it's a pity that the end is already determined…… you've heard it as well didn't you? The sound that the Outer Wall, which protects this City, has fallen."

Two locations, Three, the Outer Wall was being broken through in a series of attacks from different areas.

The inpouring wave of Demonified Titans swept the fatigued Fire Dragons and Lesser Dragons aside as they rushed towards the Palace where he now stood. And he was unsure of the extent which Asuka, Yao and the others would be able to hold out with the battle that would become a drawn out battle.

It would only be a matter of time before the balance in powers are destroyed.

"Come on, it's better to defeat me as early as possible you know? I'm already prepared to fight you for a few

hours. And in the worst case scenario, I would only need to escape to the city areas too. After all, in that duration, your comrades would surely be wiped out, right?!"

"Tch, what a talkative Hakuhatsuki!"

Izayoi crushed the ground under foot as he charged forward. His Highness had also taken on a fighting stance in response.

But the end was already clear to His Highness.

(*What a surprise, I didn't expect him to have such a weakness.*)

Each time that they crossed fists, His Highness felt a growing understanding about the character of Izayoi. Grasping the development and experiences that led up to this character did not take much time.

Sakamaki Izayoi, this man—had most likely overcome every single problem with his own strength alone. As long as it is within the realms of his power, he would be sure to protect all the things he can and eradicate the enemies with all his might.

But it is precisely because of that, which made him anxious about the situation that he had no control over.

Reason being that he overtly pampers the people around him.

(*To put it nicely, it would be the treasuring of his comrades, but this guy isn't like that. The anxiety that he feels isn't just out of his concern over his comrades. This guy, Sakamaki Izayoi—*)

—Doesn't trust his comrades.

No matter the amount of euphemisms that can be used to describe his character in a better light, the basic nature of this guy is one that is unable to trust in his comrades.

(*This weakness……is something that can be manipulated. If used correctly, it will be easy to break him down!*)

The corners of His Highness's lips twitched upwards as he started to engage in the fight once more.

He could already see the way out of this situation but the next problem was what to do next in the Game. Moreover the chess pieces in his hands were also limited and insufficient.

Then all he could do for now is to resign himself to fate while steeling his determination to swing his next punch.

Chapter 6

Part 1

—[Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames], Battlefield of the Outer Walls.

The battle between the Vampirified Titans and the Fire Dragon squads had fallen into disarray.

And the Titans, who had their aggressiveness heightened, were incapable of fighting in any recognizable style as they simply waved their swords or axes to chop as they pleased while others drew their bows to fire randomly.

Although the [Salamandra] stationed soldiers and the Fire Dragons had the numbers in their favor, the curse of fatigue caused them to continuously fall back from their front lines.

Pest had joined the fray, wielding the Disease of Black Death, but it did not seem to have much of an effect against the Vampirified Titans.

Converting the feelings of grudge and resentment into a shockwave, Pest used that move to meet their charge.

But this sort of fighting style is similar to the firepower of the Fire Dragons and it was still a far cry from being a significant move that is capable of turning the tide.

"Hah…Hah…. These Titans……is there an end to them?…"

While cursing under her breath, she launched another shockwave flying towards the Titans which exploded in their faces.

The Aerial Dragons and Lesser Dragons who rushed from the Palace had also joined the front lines but it was still insufficient to protect the streets.

And as the doors of [Kouen City] were broken from many locations, the Titans invaded the City with their swaggering gaits.

(*What do I do now……If this continues, Jin at the Palace will……*)

"Pest! Are you alright?!"

Asuka shouted from behind between her heavy panting.

At the same moment, Deen gave a loud roar as it raised a Titan to fling it back to the front lines.

「DEEEEeeeEEEEN

And as the Titan was sent rolling in an exaggerated fashion, it pulled down the other Titans who were at the frontlines as well. If it were just the same as before, this sort of injury would already have incapacitated them and put them out of battle. However, the Vampirified Titan got back up on its feet in no time and gave a roar. It was as if nothing had happened.

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

「DEEEEeeeEEEEN

Engulfing the right fist in a fiery blaze, Deen launched its burning extendable arm towards the Titan. The flaming punch that deeply buried into the flesh was indeed effective. And as the Titan started to burn, it could only writhe around on the floor in pain.

But, even while battling with all their might, they were only able to defeat two or three of those Titans.

And towards the back, more Titans were being summoned and the numbers had already exceeded 1,200.

At a short distance away, Jack was hunting the Titans mercilessly but his efforts were similar to putting out a forest fire with a cup of water—futile. The Vampirified Titans would even bite and feast upon their dead comrades' blood to heal themselves and stand up once more.

Asuka and Pest were fighting back to back but they already realized the severity of the conditions that they were fighting under.

"This is troubling……I don't think I can last much longer……"

"Asuka, that's not something I would have expected to hear from you. If you ever repeat that line, I swear that I will give you a sepsis[57] punishment game."

"Ara, up till just now, you were the one who had that look of being close to tears weren't you?"

"Guh. That's your own imagination!"

Was I seen at that time? Pest's face begin to color up with a shade of red as she continued to release her shockwaves.

However, there was no time for them to start bickering in their usual banter. Despite the help of the volunteers from the City, coming forth to battle the Titans, they were still unable to hold back the advancement of their enemies.

The duo were sweating heavily as they continued to meet the onslaught of the Titans. However, it was just a matter of time before they receive a fatal blow on themselves.

{"……Master."}

"Yes? Were you struck by a good idea to turn this tide?!"

{"No, it's the contrary. This city is already a lost cause. It's time to gather your comrades to prepare for retreat."}

"Uu……"

Hearing Almathea's cool assessment, the duo clenched their teeth.

Asuka and Pest were clear about it as well. It was impossible for them to change anything with their

current power at this point in time. Moreover, from the time that the Titans became immune to the weakness of Black Death, there would be no way to turn the tables… …!!![58]

"But……Izayoi's still fighting."

At the time where everything is on the verge of collapsing and at the foremost of the battle's frontlines.

Asuka had named the lad whom she had the most confidence in.

Having interacted with him thus far, she could understand that he is able to run further than anyone, be the first to meet the charge of the enemies in the frontlines for the sake of others and that his reasons for doing so has nothing to do with the rewarding feeling of having helped another nor was it out of heroism.

He had been born with a power that far exceeded the normal Man and fights for the justice that he believes in.

Those irises of his were filled with a sense of confidence and that was only to be expected. Having

placed his utmost effort in everything he wanted to do, living his life with no regrets, Izayoi had no need to feel guilty at the slightest.

"If we were to……to retreat now, I will never be able bring myself to say that I'm his comrade for the rest of my life!"

If Izayoi is able to defeat the leader of the enemy's camp, the tables of the battle would definitely be overturned.

And the number of people who fought with that thought as their only moral support were far from being the minority.

Then, what more can she, who stands under the same Flag as him, be doubtful about his ability to pull through.

{"Master! Even if you are okay, what about the others? The young lad who's your leader and that [Moon Rabbit] wouldn't have the ability to fight now, would they? If the Titan army were to storm into the Palace, the two of them would definitely become hapless sacrifices! Are you okay with that?"}

"Bu, But……"

Almathea's substantial addition to her argument had caused Asuka to be stumped.

During the time of this conversation, the situation continued to worsen by the moment.

"This, This is bad!! The First Dragon Tower which stands as the corner for the Palace's fortress has been broken through!!"

"What did you say?!"

"How can that happen……the last bastion that protects [Kouen City] has actually……!!"

The morale that held the Fire Dragons' determination up till now was starting to crumble. If this were to continue, the morale would not hold out and it would just be a matter of time before the defense line crumbles in defeat as well.

The end of [Kouen City] was already apparent to all of them.

Giving a glance towards the streets behind, what met the eyes were the hungry scarlet flames which engulfed

the houses instead of the warm glow of candles that used to line the streets.

(*The Corridor of Displays that used to be such a pretty sight ….. is already unrecognizable……*)

Recalling those streets which had been filled with the warm glow of candles, Asuka closed her eyes in regret.

—Asuka's ability to remain calm amidst this chaotic battle is due to her prior experience of chaos and ruin. To make it clear before any misunderstanding can arise, that is the experience which her grandfather had recounted to her, regarding the ruin and chaos of war, and it is not of her own experience.

Her grandfather who had experienced the days of war had recounted his experience to Asuka, whom he had wanted to be his successor to the financial conglomerate, on many occasions. Embroiled in the disaster known as war, the burning streets and smoldering people burnt in the attacks and many other similar stories. Her grandfather who was good at recounting his old stories had told her of the past, ever since she was a child.

—"The Kudou family is a clan that protects Japan from its invaders."

Although it is a family motto that is passed down with great reverence, it did not mean that the family supported the idea of war during those warring days. According to her grandfather, this is because Japan had also been one of the aggressors and a victim of the war. Regarding the war that stole her grandmother away in death, her grandfather had recounted that past many times to emphasize on how it would only lead to a tomorrow that sees both parties bleeding and in pain.

Then, what purpose does this invasion hold?

One-sidedly imposing of unreasonable rules, allowing the single sided invasion and stealing to occur, what then would the tomorrow hold for them? What kind of justice would there be?

"I……do not want to escape and leave these people around me behind!"

"Justice stands with me."—She wanted to shout out this line and fight till the end.

In the past, there had never been anyone who really seen her for what she was.

So now, at the very least, she wanted to be able to be proud of what she achieved in life and be able to lift her head and chest to move towards her definition of justice. Regarding that point, even though she had arrived in this different world, Asuka continues to hold true to that dream for it is the pride that Asuka carries in her heart.

But why is it that this desire—is so much more difficult in real life?

{“Master, please give your order. I can carve out a path in blood for you to allow you and your comrades to escape!”}

“……Yeah. If it’s you, it is indeed possible.”

Having said that, she had also arrived at a conclusion and she soon lifted her head.

“This is an order, Almathea. Bring Kuro Usagi and Jin back to the Community Headquarters.”[59]

{“……WHAT……?!”}

“It’s just as I say, I need to believe in Izayoi-san and fight till the end. That is the order from your master.”

{"……are you breaking the contract?"}

Bitterness had leaked into Almathea's voice. It is not that she could not carrying out Asuka's orders without a compensation in return. She had only agreed to obey because Asuka had proposed a befitting contract to her, the Mountain Goat Divine Beast who also stands as the Herald of Zeus.

Asuka shook her head with a smile as she signaled Almathea's words to be unaffirmative.

"Don't talk nonsense. I don't intend to die here. As long as Izayoi-san wins, the tide of this battle will be turned against them. I'm only believing in it and intend to wait for it to happen."

{"…… You still intend to hold by the contract, is that right?"}

"Of course. Moreover, I've not been able to make you fully obey me……you actually do not have any regard for me at all, right?"

{"Yes. I only think of you as a haughty little girl who does not commensurate to her powers and only knows how to scream and shriek in fear. …… But, you have

compassion in your heart. I believe that we can get along well."}

"Thank you—Go now, Almathea!"

Under the command of Asuka, Almathea transformed into a streak of lightning that shot towards the Palace.

Splitting through the horde of Titans.

Streaking through the City alight with the flames of destruction.

In order to accomplish the order of her master, the Mountain Goat Divine Beast charged forward.

Seeing off her figure, Asuka then confirmed the battlefield before herself. The Titans continued to swarm in with the sounds of their footsteps pounding and causing tremors on the very ground they walked upon. Besides that, Asuka had also lost her only way to defend herself.

Pest, who had heard the conversation that happened beside her was frankly surprised to the point of being silent all that time, opened her mouth to comment:

"Are you stupid?"

"…… . Even if it's me, I will also feel hurt by that."

"Then please hold it in for now. You do know what you have done right?"

"Uu……Mhm."

Perhaps she did try to look cool and overdid it a little and she was currently reflecting on it.

But seeming like an attempt to encourage its master, Deen raised its right hand to give a low bellow.

「DEeEN

"Fufu, thank you. Deen, I shall be count on you for now."

But that was beside the point. What came next would be the crucial problem.

Standing on the shoulder of Deen, Asuka used all her might to shout:

"Listen up, you Titans! We of the [No Name] will never bow under from your invasions! We will have the resolve of breaking all our bones in this fight to defend this last Great Door! If your want to invade this [City of the Brilliant Flames], don't be cowards who enter through those crumbling holes at the side. Face us squarely and triumph by defeating all of us who guard the Main Gates!"

Standing before the Main gates of [Kouen City], Asuka issued a challenge to the Titans. Despite the fact that they were vampirified, these Titans were still warriors at heart . To ignore such a challenge would be an insult to their pride.

Simultaneously, all the pairs of bloodshot eyes turned to focus on Asuka and Pest.

Seeing this as a good time for a comeback, Asuka started to spur the male warriors of [Salamandra].

"The defense line for the Palace is already torn. I understand that everyone must be feeling low on morale

at this point, but if we of the frontlines were to fall under the might of our enemies, that would be adding a burden to our comrades who battle in the City center. I know that the curse must be terrible for you…… but if you are a real Fire Dragon, a real Man, then please stand with us as a Wall against all odds!”

“Uu…!”

Using the body to be a wall if fighting is impossible. To allow the scales, forged from the trainings in the active volcano, to be the final defense.

With such a lady before them, Asuka, who willingly steeled her determination to stand at the front of the Gates, it was now impossible for the morale to stoop any further. Straining against their fatigue and mentally whipping themselves awake, the Fire Dragons stood up one after another.

“Hmph……if even a nameless pawn can arrive to that sort of determination, how can we shy away at this critical moment?”

“I agree. Just watch me as I make a comeback by breaking the blades of those swinging battle axes.”

"Ojou-chan, you should be retreating now. There's no reason for you to do it to this extent. Let us be the decoy to delay them…… Just run now."

"It's regretful but I can't do that. Our comrade has taken to the centre of this stage and if I do not stay to watch the moment of glory, wouldn't that be a little lonely for him?"[60]

"Haha, I guess you are in quite a bind! My condolences, Ojou-chan!"

Be it those who had broken wings, or even those who lost an eye, all of them were able to force a laugh and this is definitely not the doings of Asuka's power in words.

Kudou Asuka had a type of unusual quality to her character that allows her to be loved by all, regardless of their races such as the elves, the demons or the monsters.

Simple and yet elegant, casual and yet arrogant, and noble while being kind. This sort of charismatic appeal in her character is a self-accomplishment achieved through persistence in developing her own opinions and following through with them.[61]

Surrounding the main Gate where Asuka and Deen stood, everyone gave their all to shout:

“Here we stand…… Bring it on, you Titans!”

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

「GEYAAAAAAaaaa

The Titans, who trembled the grounds with their charge, totaled a hundred and twenty.

The Fire Dragons who stood against them to protect the main gates totaled a hundred and forty-five.

If they gave their all in this fight, there might still be a chance of winning. With that sort of believe, both sides had started their charge—

“Hai, it ends here.”

—With the determinations flushed out by the turbid waters that seemed to smash into them like a dragon

with the willingness to flood everything in its way, the victory was decided in an instant.

Part 2

The first to notice the change was Demon Lord of Confusion who sat cross-legged on the Outer Wall. Whereas Graiya, who used the [Genome Tree] to take on a human form, had bandages wrapped around his chest, stood nearby.

The Demon Lord of Confusion, whose red hair overflowed from the top of the tiara, gave a fierce smile, exposing his incisors, as he looked down upon the phenomenon that came upon [Kouen City].

"Arriving at long last…… the [Great Sage of Maelstroms]……"

Using a devious scheming gaze, which did not seem to belong to a regular young girl, he stared at the battle grounds below.

The silhouette of a small figure who inserted himself between the two factions of the Fire Dragons and the Titans started to grow distinct in his sight.

That guy with a single eye patch and black hair could be seen clearly. Possessing a well-toned body which would have told everyone about the great deal of training that he must have been through to achieve this level of iron-like sturdiness. Having been through a thousand years of reclusive intense trainings, his punch would even pack enough power to be comparable to the Breath of the Stars.

That, is the highest level obtainable from training in the submarine volcano of the deepest abyss for a thousand years.

Possessing the spiritual power of a thousand years, the [Dragon Deity]—[Great sage of Maelstroms], Saurian Demon King had placed himself before the Titan horde.

"Ara, I'm much later than I would have liked. Are you alright, Asuka?"

"Ye, Yeah I'm fine."

Having her determination of fighting to the death replaced by the feelings of surprise, Asuka nodded her head. But this is only understandable.

This is because the Titans which totaled a hundred and twenty strong whom Asuka and the Fire Dragons were bracing themselves to stop their charge had now been reduced to a ragtag bunch in the eddying waters released by this man.

(*This man…….is really that strong……?*)

She had heard that this man had been taking the upper hand in the fight with Izayoi in the previous battle but this scene was really much too absurd.

Kouryuu seemed to be apologetic as he scratched his head while flashing a bitter smile.

"I'm really sorry about this. Just when I wanted to rush to the North Side, there had been some troublemakers in the East Side and it took me some time to put things right."

"Troublemakers?"

"Yeah. But let's talk about the details at another time shall we—-Let's close the curtains for this Game stage first."

He raised his right hand.

And in an instant, a huge shadow fell over the [City of Brilliant Flames].

The [City of Brilliant Flames] was built with its rear against a huge mountain peak and it was naturally situated in a mountainous region. It was a city that excavated into the mountain side to create a flat plot of land as its foundation.

Not only was it surrounded by a mountain range, but it did not have any large bodies of water besides the sporadic small streams which did not pose a threat of flooding their civilization. The direction by which the underground waters travelled were controlled by Gifts. Hence, up till date, the [City of Brilliant Flames] had never experienced a disaster from flooding. And as the inhabitants of [Kouen City], the Fire Dragons and the monsters turned their eyes skywards to look at the sea which rose above the City's Outer walls, they could not help but tremble in fear as they shouted:

"It's…… It's a TSUNAMIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII—!!!!!"

They were right. That, was undoubtedly a tsunami.

A tsunami is a hazard of the highest threat level to a City and it had never been seen in this area before now. Moreover, this was a tsunami capable of devouring the entire Mountain range and it was definitely something that exceeded everyone's imagination.

Asuka's mouth was half agape as she, who was at the frontlines of the Battle at the Outer Wall, was also stumped by the absurdity of the scene before her.

"Wha…… Wha……"

Kouryuu had called up a wall of seawater to surround the Outer Walls of the city and it covered the entire city.

The volume of water would be impossible to be expressed in numerals of the tens or hundreds of tons.

The flow of water, which had the volume to drown out the entire city and more, reared up like a living creature as it swallowed the Titans amidst the roaring waves. Initially, the Titans were able to hold their own against the flow but when faced with a tidal wave that swirled like a whirlpool, their efforts were futile.

Even Aura, who commanded the Titans from the very rear, was stunned by the sight before her.

"Is that… … Is that the strength of a Fourth Digit Demon Lord?!"

Although the Titans had obtained the Gift of Vampirism, they were still unable to do anything and became similar to small pebbles when faced with a large tsunami capable of flooding the entire plains.

Aura pulled back her cowl to glare angrily towards the Main Gate of [Kouen City].

Maybe it was just coincidence—-but she felt that her glare was met by that of the Single-eyed Sea King.

"—you are the one controlling these Titans?"

Aura's heart was barely contained in her throat.

Located at the furthest end of the Titan horde, Aura was a dozen kilometers away from the [City of Brilliant Flames]. But at the moment that she was stared at by that single eye of Kouryuu, she could feel that message being sent through his gaze, directed at her.

Aura started to tremble but she would not escape by herself when her Master was still in his battle. Drawing

out her [Clarsach Orga], she then started to pluck its strings in her desperation.

"I cannot lose…… I must at least hold out till we achieve our goal! For His Highness, I will not lose here!"

Injecting her emotions into her performance, the snow white fingers danced across the strings.

The melodious music filled the battlefield and seeped into the Heavens and Seas. Although it was unable to wrest control of the authority over them, it was still able to reduce the momentum of the seawater flow.

And the Titans, who had been washed away, started to invade once more.

Kouryuu's tsunami had only been diverted to the area away from the City Outer Walls and that was out of consideration for Asuka, Pest and the Fire Dragons.

As long as they were able to breach into that area, they would have a chance at victory.

Using their strong limbs to wade through the flow of seawater, the Titans broke through the Seawater barrier.

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

A trio of Titans stepped out of the seawater zone to swing down their battle axes at the same time. The blades of the battle axes, which measured multiple times larger than Kouryuu himself, were swung towards his head and his sides.

But Kouryuu continued to fold his arms without budging from his position.

The blades had already closed in on him to the point which he could not dodge in any direction. And as the Titans were feeling the sensation of hitting their mark—they were also dismayed by the overwhelming sense of invincibility before them.

"…….Uoo!"

Their blades had indeed chopped on his flesh.

If one were to use an iron blade that weighed many times heavier than the target to chop into the flesh, the feedback sensation from their hands should have matched the sensation of chopping into flesh.

However, the sensation that travelled up into the hands of the Titan warriors were that of numbness. Feeling the sensation that was similar to striking their blades into the hard crust of the ground, the Titans then understood that there was a wide power difference between themselves and the enemy which can never be breached, just like the difference between Heaven and Earth.

Using the body that was similar to the hardness of steel to block the attack, Kouryuu maintained his stance to give a smile that made his single exposed eye narrow to a single line as he commented:

"Oh my, what a nice massage that makes me a little drowsy now. It's just like the ocean spray slapping on the cliffs."

"……Uu!"

That is right for it is an accurate simile.

When it came to this man before them, the strike of a Titan would only be likened to droplets which spray from the crest of the wave. No matter how strong the Titan's prided bodies were, or the battle axes which

handles were as thick as tree trunks—All those were just little ticks and twigs in the eyes of this man, whose spiritual power is enough to create maelstroms in the seas.

"Fuahahaha! You are still as strong as ever, o'scion of the Eastern Seas-sama!"

Mhm, tilting the narrow eyes to look towards the top of the Outer Walls, Kouryuu spotted the Demon Lord of Confusion standing there while laughing wildly in an uncouth manner with the arms crossed like the stance of a Niō[62].

The Demon Lord of Confusion who had a crooked smile on his face pointed at Kouryuu and gave a louder laugh.

"Dragon King of the Eastern Seas sure is a blind old fogey. Although you are an illegitimate son of a concubine, but the child has surpassed the father. Fufu, actually it might not be all too surprising if you were to be chosen as the next generation of the Yellow Dragon too."[63]

"…Hue? At first glance, I actually thought that you were Sasa, but there's someone else in that body right?—That sort of shameless attitude when discussing the stories of others during their developmental years and that despicable smile……what brings the bones of the old recluse hither, Confusion?"

"Well, isn't it the same as you? There are quite a number of newbies that I want to observe for a little while more. Currently, this Great me belongs to the Demon Lord Alliance of [Ouroboros] as a member."

Puffing up Sandra's small chest, the Demon Lord of Confusion smiled as he said it with pride.

Asuka, beside Kouryuu, whispered softly to convey the latest situation.

"Sandra's body has been possessed by him due to the [Authority of Host Master]. Do you know of any way to dispel it?

"……Sorry. Although I've heard of the contents from my elder sister, but I do not know of the full requirements to be fulfilled."

"Is that so? But since the contents is known, that would mean that it is possible to clear, right?"

Then, perhaps there might be a way to save her. Asuka wanted to ask for more details but Graiya and the Demon Lord of Confusion did not give her that chance.

"With the most troublesome Almathea gone, now's the best opportunity for our win! Are your wounds still okay ?!"

"Almost there but this is an opportunity that I will not miss. If we want to get rid of them, we must do it now!!"

"Agreed! Let's settle things with Kouryuu, okay? Grai-boya!"[64]

"Who are you calling Grai- boya, you little girl!"

Graiya, who had transformed into an adult Human with his anthropomorphication technique, gave an angry retort.

Materializing a rod that was twice as tall as himself from his Gift card, Kouryuu whacked the three Titans from behind to send them flying into the sky.

The three had been sent flying with the destination being that of the Demon Lord of Confusion and Graiya but the other party were not to be done in by this level of attacks. Graiya, who transformed into his Black Dragon form from his Gryphon form, had used the flick of his wrist to knock aside the Titans before charging down with the red-haired girl who hid behind his body springing out after him.

"Fuahahaha! Come on, let's bring it on, the vengeance that spans a thousand years! Moreover, this vessel here is an exceptionally good one too! Being the substitute for the Great Sage, let's just start by smashing that pretentious face of yours!"[65]

"—Hou? A Five Digit challenging a Four Digit? Don't go overestimating yourself now, you Ape!"

The wildly raging flames swelled with the swirling flow of seawater.

And the battle situation that covered the entire [Kouen City] was intensifying by the moment.

Due to the flow of seawater that stands in their way, the speed of the Titan's invasion had been slowed. At the

same time, the number of Titans attempting to attack the Outer Wall was reduced by half, but even then, the battle strength of both parties were still at a draw.

The burning battlefield did not seem to have any signs of cooling off any time soon.

But from this continuous heightening of the battle situation, everyone—could feel the gradual approach of the calm that will befall with the drawing of the curtains to this Game stage.

Chapter 7

Part 1

"—, sorry……"

Then came the wet sucking sound as Rin's dagger was buried in the back of Jin's waist.

Hearing the apology that accompanied the stab, Jin's head started to swim as his eyes started to roll and lose focus.

"Ri…in, why?"

"Haha, as expected of the "Strategist [Game Controller]"-sama! When I thought that you might be swayed over by the enemy to betray us, I couldn't help but feel a chill run down my back just now!"

The owner of the voice clapped his hands while walking down the spiraling stairs. The man who wore the red and blue strikingly contrasted jacket was undoubtedly Maxwell Demon Lord himself.

"Fufu…… our 'strategist'-sama have quite the brains and brawns. You've really changed my perception of you

. To backstab such a simple-minded lad, you are really quite merciless.”

Walking closer to Jin and Rin, who was stained by the blood, Maxwell was beaming a wide smile that seemed to be his way of controlling his urge to laugh.

“HngHmph, you should know that we women are capable of nastiness as well. —So when did you start watching us?”

“Oh, only the last part. Just when he started to spin his lies. Well, it’s all because of my bashful bride running away from me again that I’ve been chasing her until a moment ago.”

“Ah~…… so that’s how it is.”

—what a liar. Rin and Jin’s instincts were telling them that.

Although they couldn’t be sure when he had started to listen in on them, but this man had surely heard of their plans. And Rin had narrowly pulled it off by stabbing Jin when she noticed his presence.

Watching the whole drama played out before him as an amusing joke, this man couldn't help but have a smile plastered across his face which was his way of suppressing the urge to laugh.

"Come to think about it, "Strategist"-sama, have you gotten hold of the inheritance of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars yet?"

"I was about to get it. —Mhm. I also wanted to let him see something special before sending him on his way across the Sanzu River. Hence I staged the little play just now."

"Hoho, that's really……"[66]

Maxwell had a smirk on his face as he fixed them with his horrid gaze.

It was then that Jin realized his fatal error.

(*This is bad…… The men under His Highness aren't his private army but one that is mixed with a pair of eyes working for their superiors……!*)

And that person was none other than Maxwell Demon Lord. Even if Rin possessed a Gift that is seemingly invincible, she would still be in trouble when matched with an opponent who can perform instantaneous teleportation to dispose of her. He would also possess the freedom to report his findings at any point in time.

Only being aware of this now, Jin gripped his fist with his other hand as he knelt over in regret.

(*I was too hasty……I was too focused on the fact that I might lose the chance to negotiate with Rin if I lost this chance!*)

If he had given it more thought, he should have arrived at the speculation of a look-out in their midst. But in the end, he had caused it to escalate into a situation that almost brought harm to Rin and His Highness as well. And by doing so, he had closed off the option for Rin to let him live as letting him off would put them into an unfavorable light.

"Then, 'Strategist'-sama. What do you plan to do with him?"

"Tie him up and bring him with us. After all, Jin's power is quite rare."

"—What?" Maxwell's expression had changed.

The mirth had left his eyes and there was a trace of animosity and doubt that started to grow in his gaze. However, Rin did not back away as she returned the stare and pointed her dagger at him.

"Maxwell-san, I should be asking you why you are here. Didn't I ask of you to capture both the [Genome Tree] and Willa the Ignis Faatus, alive? Or is it so difficult that a fourth digit Demon Lord is also forced to run back with the tail between his legs?"

"……That's—"

"I'm not willing, but to bring Jin Russel back with us would also count as an accomplishment. For us who are in need of all the accomplishments we can get, to earn us some favor, this is indeed a realistic decision. You should be able to understand that right?"

"Uu—" Maxwell gave a dissatisfied withering look but seemed to have agreed with Rin's decision.

Pak! With a snap of his fingers, Maxwell had Jin locked in ice cuffs while using fire to cauterize the wound.

"Ouf, Guh……"

"Oh? You have quite some backbone on you eh? Although it's just a small entry wound, it's still a feat to not scream from the cauterization process." Maxwell gave his insincere praise while Rin continued to watch with an unfeeling face. After all, if she were to say something that did not match her position, her intentions would have been given away.

"Mah, if you want to play with him, that's fine by me, but it's almost time to notify the rest to prepare their retreat, right?"

"Oh……? Why?"

Maxwell stared at Rin with suspicion and it was clear that he no longer trusted her words.

However, Rin fearlessly announced her decision to Maxwell.

Though her heart was pained by the inner turmoil, but she could only use this method to tide the situation over.

"I will be obtaining the inheritance of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars right now and releasing the seal of that Demon Lord—Issue the order to all our members to get out of North Side immediately."

Saying that, Rin retrieved the Dragon Horn of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars. She then placed the two dragon horns upon the sealing pedestal with the tattered cloth that was used to wrap around them and the items immediately gave off a hazy glow.

But what had glowed wasn't just limited to the Dragon Horns.

"……No, it can't be."

Jin momentarily forgot about his pain as he stared at that particular radiance.

However, what he had forgotten wasn't just the pain on his side. For in his mind, the matters such as the battle that was taking place currently on the outside, or even Maxwell who was standing beside him, they were all thrown aside as it took greater precedence.

—That glowing tattered piece of cloth was a Flag.

And that was a flag that he would never forget. It was the flag that Jin and Kuro Usagi had always looked up to during their years of growing up. Even if it were stolen or desecrated, the flag that continues to fly in their hearts had never disappeared.

The cloth that had a red background bordered with gold threads, depicted a girl with the rising sun behind the hills and this was a flag that had no other like it in this world.

"You must become a Man worthy of this Flag."

Jin had grown up under such expectations from both his parents and the other adults. It was also the line that kept Kuro Usagi, the senior group and the other kids going even when the times were tough.

Even if it were to be at the expense of everything in his life, this is the one and only flag in the world—

"Hmph, for this rag to actually be the flag that belonged to the Community that defeated the most Demon Lords in the history of Mankind."

"……and you still have the cheek to say that when you obviously didn't have any trick to handle their leader."

At Rin's mock surprise, Maxwell fell silent.

Spreading the Flag across the pedestal, she then inserted the Dragon Horns of the Dragon King of the Sea of Stars.

"With this, everything is set. Then we would just need fire to be injected into the dragon horns to act as the catalyst for stimulating the ley lines and the veins of the volcano. And that would release the seals of the [Ecliptic path of the Twelve Chén] and [Another Cosmology]."

"The [Dragon]'s Sovereignty of the Sun……Hoho. With this, His Highness will be a step closer to completion."

Maxwell walked over to stand before the pedestal where he placed his hands upon the Dragon horns to release a fiery blaze,

"Here goes—Open, the Gates of Hell!"

Part 2

—[Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames] Workroom District, Sector 88.

The battle between Izayoi and His Highness, after jumping out of the Palace, continued to be a sticky situation and a total of 77 sectors had already been destroyed.

They continued to launch their fierce attacks at each other with enough power to shatter their own bones and causing their limbs to swell as they forced each other to their limits. But their fighting spirits did not seem to decrease. On the contrary, it was increasing. This wasn't due to their pride but it was the situation, where they were carrying the burden of their respective camp's fate, that led them to forget about the pain of their battered and bruised bodies.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaarrrrrhhhhhhh!"

"Uooooooooooooooooohhhhh!"

Straining to raise their right fists, it had the scene not unlike the brave roars of lions as they buried their fists into each other. At the same time, their knees buckled

forward, which allowed them to maintain some sort of balance.

The ground gave off a rumble like a scream in pain as it gave way even before their bodies could do so, dropping them down into the underground canal. This sort of fall wouldn't have been a problem to them on normal days, but with their current bodies as battered as they were, they had already exceeded their limits.

The bodies in free fall met the cold surface of the water canal.

Even though their consciousness were about to leave them anytime, the chilling waters were a blessing to them as they were jolted awake by its chilliness. Izayoi was the first to get onto his feet and His Highness had also done the same.

But from the sequence of getting up, it was a clear indication about the extent of their injuries.

"Ha…… What's the matter, Hakuhatsuki…… your kneecaps are quivering a lot."

"What is quivering …… is your face, you fool."

And His Highness coughed a mouthful of blood. It would seem that his ribs had punctured his lung and it was evident that His Highness's condition was much worse than Izayoi's.

"…… do you still want to go at it?"

"Of course. My defeat would mean the defeat of [Ouroboros]. The tables of the situation would also be turned over if I did. ……My subordinates are still fighting valiantly, so how can I just admit defeat here!"

Lifting up his head, His Highness renewed his fighting spirit to burn at a higher intensity.

Facing his opponent who had such a strong fiery determination, capable of churning the cold waters in the underground water canal, Izayoi couldn't help but ask:

"…… I just don't get it. What's the purpose for you and your subordinates to have this battle? Is there a meaning or benefit from defeating the [Floor Master]s? Isn't that only going to disrupt the peace and order of the society?"

Seeming like a breach in the levee[67], numerous questions flowed from Izayoi.

Having traded numerous blows with His Highness, Izayoi was still unable to see the background of this lad in terms of his developmental stages—No, it is more accurate to say that the insight, which he had grasped from the fight, did not match up with the actions.

Although he didn't want to admit it, this lad wasn't bad in his nature.

Even if that were the case, it didn't mean that he is kind-natured either. If we had to give him a category, then a moderation between both would be the best place to classify him. This lad did not seem to be committing evil deeds by his own volition.

Then, that would only leave one answer.

"There's a bigger organization behind you. You are taking their orders, aren't you?"

"……"

Not denying and neither did he affirm it, His Highness just looked up at the sky in silence.

The sky was overcast with clouds that blotted out the stars and moon. It would seem that there would not be a showing of stars tonight. Even so, he continued to search the skies, seeming to seek out a ray of light in the night sky that was enveloped in darkness, while stretching out his hand before clenching it into a fist.

"……there's actually no purpose at all."

"What?"

"I do not have any purpose of my own. Excuse me for this but even though I'm with this appearance, I've not even reach my third year in life. I don't even have the time to think about things such as the varieties and diversities in life, or even things that I want. All I have is the knowledge which have been bestowed upon me during my birth."

"Wha…"

The revelation by His Highness had struck Izayoi like a lightning bolt. To describe it as an impact that he had never felt before might not be an exaggeration as well. Compared to the fierce impacts that had landed on his body, this was far greater in magnitude and it caused

Izayoi to be speechless. It was already beyond the question of being good or evil.

This lad couldn't even be classified in the middle grounds of those two—instead, he was a lad who was steeped in sin but yet pure and innocent.

"Even a person like me have something valuable to me . They who call me 'Your Highness' and elevate me upon the palanquin[68] befitting a God. If there's something that I can call as my purpose, that would be them. I'm not sure what kind of dreams that my subordinates see in me, but if they are able to see their dreams from my back —" He stretched out the tightly clenched fist before him.

And an undying flame of determination was ablaze within his golden irises.

"—then I shall allow them to continue seeing their dreams. To continue climbing in this world of Little Garden where the Gods reside. And for that aim, I will clear all obstacles that stands in the way. It does not matter whether they are my birth parents or Demon Lords. For my compass will always lie in the loyalties of Gra-Oji-chan, Aura and Rin."

A limpid and honest gaze. This white haired lad with golden irises respected and trusted in the loyalties of his subordinates. As long as he had that sort of fated bond with them, he would continue to push his bruise riddled body forward.

"……"

In regards to that noble determination, Izayoi gave him a pitiful gaze.

He was already done with listening to this. To bestow knowledge to a child that has yet to experience it himself and to form a resolution within them to fight to the point of being battered all over—is something that he just couldn't accept as being correct.

If this lad had his own dreams or ambition, it would have been acceptable.

That is because Izayoi has a persistent characteristic of changing the things around him to conform to the path that he deems to be 'good'. Sometimes, it might also result in situations that only benefit others. But that is something that he would have wished for and he would never regret the decision. And as long as he is able to transform his feelings of being responsible into

something higher in his heart, he will daresay that he isn't being arrogant or adamant about winning.

However, for this lad— who didn't have a reason to look forward to while battling, to be engaged in a battle, what kind of returns does he expect to get from this……?

"…… Mah, I guess that's your life. If you are offering yourself for the sake of others, it would be pointless for me to stop that. But damn, that does add more reason for me to fight you."

He then focused a stronger determination into his fist than ever before. At this current state, even the Gods would also be easily crushed to dust by this fist. It was this fist, one which he had injected such an extent of rage and power, which he stretched out before himself.

"I will use all my strength—-to make you regret your life. A little brat who finds such a noble-sounding nonsensical reason while placing the reason to fight upon others, will need to be given a sound beating from me. And I shall be letting you understand this fact in a while. "

Life is a continuous battle. Be it the world of the outside or this other world that they have come to. The

only difference is that in the world of Little Garden, the wars were replaced in the form of Gift Games.

In the world that Izayoi came from, the endings of the defeated in a civil war were just as tragic. In the worst case, they would also lose their lives. Being able to incite wars without a need to resort to physical strength, it was no wonder that people were dying.

And this lad who placed his reason for battle upon the backs of others—-should never have existed.

Izayoi believed that no matter what the reason may be, the reason for people to fight should always be born from their own dreams.

Hence, he would use this fist to defeat this lad.

And what he learns from this, would then be entirely left for him to decide.

"The next move will really bring the curtains of this Game to a close— have you prepared yourself?"

"Ahah. But the one who will win is me."

Up till the end, the white haired lad with golden irises was still unwilling to back down.

The chance of winning is not a complete zero. As long as there's a chance of winning, he always chase after it and grasp it tightly. Although he had only three years of experience in life, but that was how he had won in all his battles.

The water surface in the underground water canal rippled violently due to the escalating fighting spirits of the two combatants and it was seemed close to the formation of water sprays. The ground was also creaking in agony and it wouldn't be too strange if it were to collapse at any moment.

The battle between the two who had their fighting spirits ablaze —

"—Eh?!"

Was interrupted by the threat, rising up from the crust of the lithosphere, which exceeded that of their current battle.

"The ground's shaking…… really intensely! This can't be a normal earthquake, right?!"

Being battered all over with injuries, they were unable stand firmly on their two feet and could only choose to drop their stance to prop themselves against a wall. The magnitude of the quake was so great that one would immediately understand that this was no natural disaster and it was able to bend and break up the underground canal that was supposed to be resistant to such earth movements.

The sound of houses collapsing above ground could be heard. And it wasn't just one or two, but sounded more of dozens at a time.

The tremor that seemed like a deliberate attempt to change the geological landscape—that was the feeling that this intense earthquake gave to others. Standing within the underground water canal that led from the huge mountain peak, the two of them understood that the epicenter of the quake had originated from somewhere below the vein of the volcano.

(*The dormant volcano have become active once more and erupted? Why must it be at this time……*)

It must have been a deliberate act of someone to have created this tremor. Although the exact method or purpose for that action were unknown, but Izayoi's thoughts were already set on that assumption.

"Could it be……that the seal has been released? What are they doing when the game is still on-going?"

"Oi, what's that about?!"

"Let's do the explanations another time! Just swear upon the oath to immediately pause this Game! And immediately head out of [Kouen City] or else everyone will just be killed!"

Drawing out the [Geass Roll], His Highness was in frantic state when he threw it over. And although Izayoi, who could not make head or tail out of what His Highness was saying, caught the document with his hand, he did not make a move to swear the oath.

"Explain to me what this is all about for starters!! This earthquake had been caused by you guys, wasn't it?"

"Damn it, for your observation skills to fall to such a level at this point in time! We are indeed the cause of it, but that is also something that I did not expect! That intense earthquake was just the aftershocks from the revival of the Demon Lord sealed beneath the ground."

"That……That was actually just the aftershocks……?!"

Stumped by the honest and direct explanation, Izayoi fell silent. Even if it were Izayoi, such a scale of an Earthquake might not be able to be created from Izayoi's swing of his fist. But His Highness had said that to be just the aftershocks.

Since the aftershocks had originated from an epicenter beneath the Mountain peaks—

"—wait a moment, could it be that the Demon Lord was sealed… in the mountain behind the Palace?"

The earthquake was intensifying and the sound of the eruption from the active volcano finally reached the ears of the people who were in the underground canal. His Highness looked straight at Izayoi with a bitter expression as he nodded his head.

"That eruption just now should have been the last precursor. The first location, which have the highest possibility of being targeted by the revived Demon Lord — would be the [Salamandra] Palace."

"—!!!"

There was no need for further explanations. Izayoi dragged his bruised and battered body to leap out of the underground canal. Throwing aside the thoughts on the threat of the Demon Lord and the tremors, he charged towards the place where his comrades were.

Epilogue

Part 1

—Finally, the gates of Hell have been opened.

Part 2

—[Kouen, City of Brilliant Flames], Fifth Right Wing of the Palace.

The earthquakes had brought all battles within the Palace to a standstill. The Titans were toppling over in their clusters while the Fire Dragons had also collapsed as their bodies couldn't handle the strain of the extended periods of flight.

Even those who were far away from the volcano were able to see its re-activity and the district invaders had also started to redraw.

However, the real reason for their fear wasn't because of the magma[69] that spewed from the volcano peak.

Kuro Usagi, who hid in the Fifth Right Wing of the Palace, was also fretfully watching the volcano that continued to erupt.

(*What could this be…… there seems to be some sort of terrifying atmosphere in the air……*)

Even Kuro Usagi, who had lost her divine powers, was able to sense the overwhelmingly huge power that seem to contract and stretch like a worm's tunneling motion under the ground. The volcano that didn't seem to have an end to its lava flow was the very semblance of the gates of hell opening above ground.

If anyone were to appear from that active volcano—it would definitely be the personification of Hell in the form of a monster that walks upon the land.

(*The palace of [Salamandra] would still be fine even with the lava flowing around it……but for everyone else who are battling out there, are they really going to be okay?*)

Although Kuro Usagi had lost her Usagimimi, she was still able to tell that the situation of the battle wasn't going too well.

If only I could use the authority of [Judge Master]. Such were the regrets that were in her heart but she was unable to do anything about the situation.

Looking at the night sky that was overcast with clouds which hid the moon from view, she decided to pray for her comrades' safety.

—Please hear my prayer and allow everyone return safely.

—Please hear my prayer and allow us to return to those happy times.

—O' Patron god, please bestow your divine war god's protection upon everyone.

With fingers interlaced and clasped before her, she prayed for her wishes to come true. That way, it would also make her feel more at ease.

"…..Okay! It should be alright now!"

Kuro Usagi clenched her fists before her chest in a form of self-encouragement. It is not known if it is just

due to her mental state being at ease, but the earthquake seemed to have diminished in magnitude. This could have been the answer from Indra.

The overcast skies had cleared somewhat and the moon could be seen peeking from the shadows of the cloud layer—

Part 3

—Before the main doors of [Kouen City]'s Outer Wall.

Due to the eruption of the volcano, the battle at the frontlines were momentarily paused. And this isn't the work of someone's order.

The Fire Dragons, the veteran warriors or even the Titans, everyone had frozen in their attacks as they watch the magma spew out of the huge peak. Whether they were of the Titans or even the veteran monsters, they would still meet the same end when caught by the lava flow. The only ones who might be able to survive would be the large sized Fire Dragons. The Titans, who were hemmed between the waves and the oncoming lava, had already fallen into disarray as they realize that they are

surrounded, creating the perfect opportunity to be struck down.

Asuka had also stopped in her tracks as she wanted to have a better look at the battle situation that continued to be filled with unpredictability.

And it was just then that she sensed the change—

"—,?"

Zukuri

A chill that travelled down her spine.

There didn't seem to be anything special happening around her but just that chilly sensation along her back. However, it wasn't a typical chill. It would be more accurately described as the unpleasantness of an icy caress of a Death God's hand that ran down her back

Similarly, Kouryuu, the Demon Lord of Confusion, Percher and Graiya had turned to fix their sights on the volcano.

"……what was that just now?"

In the midst of the battle, Kouryuu thoughts, on the strategies to capture the Demon Lord of Confusion who was now in the possession of Sandra's body, were halted.

It was neither a sensation of animosity or oppressiveness.

If one had to put a thumb on it— it would be the sensation of an instinctive reflex of an over-sensitive deer lifting its head in reaction to a lion's approach.

(*What…… is happening……?!*)

Unconsciously, Kouryuu's hands which held the rod were already soaked with his perspiration. He, who had experienced hundreds of battles, was currently experiencing an unprecedented sense of threat that just couldn't be put into words. Planning to trace the source of the sensation, he closed his eyes to focus upon the active volcano. However, he was unable to find any large sources of spiritual power at the active volcano; hence, he increased the radius to start tracing the residue of the spiritual power.

The formless oppressive sense of presence that is in control of this area……

"…… is in the sky……!"

Almost simultaneously, Yō at the interior area of the palace had also traced the source of the presence. When it came to the skill of scouting, her powers could be ranked at the top few. Having discovered the source of the threat much earlier than Kouryuu, Yō had already turned her gaze skyward. Using her eyes which glinted in the dark, similar to the nocturnal predatory birds, to search the cloud cover. To find the exact location took no time at all.

Because the culprit, did not even bother to hide itself.

"……Uu…!"

Seeming like an attempt to fill up the gap created in the dark and densely overcast skies, the hazy view of the moon had appeared. And a small figure could be seen extending its wings while having the yellowish moonlight draped across its back like a cloak

The figure that had its back facing the moonlight was pure white from head to toe and it had unfurled its crooked wings, which did not seem to have been the result of a natural selection process. Moreover, there was no dragon of that form that could be found within the phylogenetic tree.

(*Pureblood dragons do not exist within the Phylogenetic tree …… But is there really such a living creature……?*)

Ruby red eyes that seem to shine like a star of omens[70] in the night.

The strange looking trio of heads had stakes hammered through the top of their skulls which exited through their lower jaws.

The trio of heads that had six eyes in total were sufficient to snuff out any courage in their enemies. It neither had a biological function nor did it have a symbolic meaning to increase its mysteriousness. One can only guess that it is a form chosen to invoke a physiological aversion that would progress into fear in all who see it.

Despite being a length of about three meters— that indescribable oppressive pressure was way above that of the huge dragon.

(*I can't be wrong about this…… It's definitely the strongest type. And it is stronger than the huge dragon!*)

The three headed dragon hovered in the air above [Kouen City] while looking down upon the city with its six eyes.

Each of those individual heads were looking down in a different location in an attempt to get a grasp on the current situation. And that move clearly confirmed everyone's query— this monster possessed intelligence.

Moving the heads independently and repeating the action of tilting those heads a few more times—-The three headed dragon extended its wings by a few folds and started to fan them.

The three headed dragon fanned its wings effortlessly—Instantaneously sweeping the dark clouds that had been covering the night sky and causing the veil of the night sky to be blown aside.

"—This is bad! Willa, run now!"

"Eh?" Willa tilted her head but sadly, it was all too late .

The casual fanning of the wings by the three headed dragon caused the sea of clouds to split into halves

before being dispersed. The impact that shook the very atmosphere became waves of vibration that caused the starlight to be distorted. That same shockwave had also transformed into two huge tornadoes that swept towards the City area, causing the wall of seawater flow created by Kouryuu to be destroyed in an instant.

“Wha……What?!”

But that was not all. The tornadoes may have completely destroyed the seawater phenomenon summoned by Kouryuu but it also gave the same treatment to all that were swallowed in its way without a decrease in intensity.

「UOOOOOOOOOooooooooo—!!!

「GEYAAAAaaaaa

Be it the glass that lined the corridors, the battle axes of the Titans, the scales of the Fire Dragon or their wings, all of them were sucked up into the skies without any partiality. The game just didn’t matter anymore as the situation had already progressed to this stage. The City region and the Palace were already crumbling into piles of rubble with just the force of its wing beats.

"Kyaah!"

"Willa!"

Following the collapse of the Palace, Yō and Willa were sucked into the tornado. But, Almathea had dashed over in a flash of lightning to pick them up in her mouth, before galloping out of the tornado. Nimbly swinging the both of them by the neck of their clothes, she seated them upon her back and bellowed anxiously:

{"You two, hold on tight! We are leaving this region immediately!"}

"How, How could we do this?! I'm not going to leave everyone here and escape on my own!"

{"I will not allow any objections! That Demon Lord is of the strongest kind! It is the Heavenly armies' responsibility to subjugate him! Even if it's you, I don't think you are that naïve to be ignorant about the power difference between you and that thing, right?!"}

The stern lecture made Yō shut her mouth. Even so, she wanted to retort but that urge had soon disappeared as she spotted Kuro Usagi, from the corner of her vision, lying on the rubble.

"Not good. If she's alone at that place……!"

Kuro Usagi had not seen Yō and the others as her gaze was fixed upon the three headed dragon. In a daze, Kuro Usagi's lips were quivering.

"Ah….A, Urk……?!"

The memories of her childhood were reawakened.

The hometown razed by fires, the pitiful cries and moans of pain, the beasts that were numerous enough to engulf the entire forest.

The monster that caused the race of [Moon Rabbit]s to be wiped out within a night.

"That's not possible……That demon lord, wasn't it……defeated by Canaria-sama and the others already ……?"

One step and two, Kuro Usagi started to move shakily in a trance-like state and this caused her to attract the attention of the greatest disaster.

It's not known whether the eyes of that three headed dragon had noticed Kuro Usagi standing on the rubble, but it gave of a howl that did not seem to belong to this world before making its rapid descent.

「_____

GYEEEEEEEEEEYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA/

That cry of absolute might had even caused the magma to be forced back into the volcano and pressure it into a huge depression in the ground. Chandeliers shattered and the fragments scattered like the petals of a glass flower, showering down upon the city.

Kuro Usagi lifted her head to look at the three headed dragon heading in her direction while in her trance and made an observation that seemed to be remote from herself.

—Ah. She will be dying here.

"—away, KURO USAGI—!"

Following the sound of an atmospheric explosion, there were two other shouts.

Guish— came the sound of a fist shattering. Blood sprayed and dyed Kuro Usagi in red. Her glossy black hair and pure white skin were given a blood-red layer of foundation as a large amount of blood spewed from the punctured organs. When she finally realized whose blood it belonged to, Kuro Usagi's eyes had widened to their maximum. Seeming to have seen something that she did not want to believe, she whispered:

"……Iza, yoi-san……?"

He had suffered a fatal injury. The claw of the three headed dragon had ripped open Izayoi's abdomen, puncturing his organs.

Faced with the person who had always had a carefree and nonchalant face now twisted in agony and pain, with his breaths coming shallow and rapid, Kuro Usagi had turned pale as blood drained out of her complexion. His fist had made contact with the three headed dragon's skull before receiving the strike from the claws but the reaction alone was enough to cause that fist to bend and fracture.[71]

Staring at his fractured right hand, he had the first experience of uncertainty in his life.

(……*This doesn't seem to be a good situation.*)

—I can't win. It wasn't an excuse. But Izayoi's heart had accepted that harsh truth.

Kuro Usagi fell into a deeper trance but the opponent wasn't one who would allow her that sort of slack. Izayoi gripped the claw that penetrated his abdomen as he shouted with all his strength.

"Gu…ah…… bring Kuro, Usagi…… and run, Almathea!"

{"Uu, Understood!"}

Responding to his determined shout, Almathea's hooves flew into activity. She was also a warrior and one that was battle hardened. Reading the meaning of Izayoi's shout, and the accompanying confused thoughts, came easy to her. At the instant before Almathea took off with Kuro Usagi in her grasp, she gave a bow to Izayoi:

{"—Wishing you a triumphant fight."}

"……aah. I will leave them to you. This dragon…… I will be the one to delay it……!!!"

That choice of words and that sort of figure that faced away from her. It all seemed to overlap with Kuro Usagi's memories of her parents.

"No…..No, Ah…… don't……!"

She knew it clearly in her heart. She knew the sort of determination that was symbolized by that back view and understood what the result of that determination would be. Kuro Usagi leaned out from the back of Almathea as she desperately reached her hand towards Izayoi's back.

Seeing her actions, Izayoi forced out a smile with a pained expression as he gave a light shake of his head.

"—Sorry. About the promise to retrieve the flag…… I don't think I can keep the promise anymore."

It was the first time in his life that he apologized without any disguise to his words. Kuro Usagi gave a soundless cry and wanted to lean out her body further, but was stopped by Almathea. Tears flowed like a

broken levee down her face as she tried her best to reach out to him, but her hands weren't able to reach anything.

His figure gradually faded into the distance and disappeared from view as the black scrolls started to rain down from the sky. The three headed dragon did not even bother to look at the escaping people as it quietly measured up Izayoi with its six eyes.

"……hoho, are you betting your life for your comrades ? No matter how long it has been for me, the sight of hell on earth sure makes my blood boil with excitement as always."

"……Ha. Same here….. What an earth-shaking…… revelation. I didn't expect you to be capable of speech."

"Of course. Actually, I do not use speech since that would allow me to be elevated higher in the spectrum of monstrosity—but when it comes to those that are dying, it would be a different matter. I guess it can be called a parting gift before sending them on their way."

Giving its huge wrist a flick, it flung Izayoi off its claws. At the same time, a large volume of blood spurted out from the puncture wounds but the flow was forcefully staunched by the power of his muscles.[72]

Izayoi wiped the blood at the corner of his mouth and took a fighting stance as gave a condescending laugh.

“Oh my, that sure is thoughtful of you. Well, there’s this something. I just really want to know no matter what . …… May I ask a question?”

“Oh?” The three headed dragon gave a quizzical response in its surprise. It wouldn’t have thought that there would be someone who would ask in that sort of dire circumstance.

Izayoi readjusted his breathing before looking straight into the ruby red eyes as he questioned.

“Which mythological group would you belong to?”

The seriousness of the tone caused the three headed dragon to lose his smile and be stumped. But the reaction

was also reasonable. In the span of two hundred years, the residents of Little Garden had feared his name and the fear continued to exist till today.

"There's actually someone who asks for my name…… Okay… Since this is a battle that has been halted for over two hundred years, reporting my own name wouldn't be too much a request to fulfill."

The three headed dragon pointed to his back where the flag emblazoned with the original character of [Aksara]—[Evil] was worn for full display.

During the time that the world was still a formless mass that hasn't been actualized, when heaven and earth was separated, light and dark were born, lines of good and evil were clearly drawn. Those were all the smallest units of the world that made up the oldest cosmology.

Swiveling the top half of its body, the three headed dragon reported his name:

"A third Digit of Little Garden, one of the gods of Zoroastrianism—Demon Lord Azi Dahaka. Having accepted the Flag and the Third Digit status from the

Sovereign Lord, I've pledged to spend my life as a Demon Lord, to become the incarnation of an implacable vengeance towards all existence!!!"

A hot fiery wind picked up from the active volcano. Blown by the wind that was similar to that found in the Mountains and Rivers of Hell, it caused the Flag of [悪][73] to billow out behind him as the pure white body and ruby red eyed Demon Lord gave a roar.

"Give it your all, O'Hero born after the wait of hundreds of years!

Exhaust all your strength!

Muster all your resourcefulness!

Show me your recklessness—Become the glorious sword to pierce my chest!"[74]

This night, the stars were shaken and a wind that whipped through the three worlds had started to pick up .

The once silent gears of the world have now started to turn and move in tandem with the unrest and raging spirits.

Afterwords

It’s been some time everyone. I’m already a fearless Tatsunoko Tarou.

I’m glad that the animated series of << Mondaiji-tachi ga Isekai Kara Kuru Sou Desu yo?>> seems to be welcomed by the audience.

And as long as my readers enjoy themselves, I will also be happy for them.

Many thanks to the people who have worked hard to produce such a wonderful project. And Editor Y-sensei, Editor T-sensei and Amano-sensei who have been running around with me, having caused them a lot of

trouble and yet staying by me to fight up till now, I'm really grateful for their support. It's through the many helping hands that lend themselves to the cause that the << Mondaiji-tachi ga Isekai Kara Kuru Sou Desu yo?>> animated series managed to progress that smoothly.

I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to all relevant personnel involved in the project.

……Okay, then,

I shall be ~really~ much more fearless in the next portion!

After all, the animation have come to an end! And I've survived the busiest period for the media campaigns!

From today onwards, please enjoy the two serializations of the manga from Rio Nanamomo and Anri Sakano! With that, I can finally concentrate on the penning of the stories!

When the animation was confirmed, I was in half a mind to run away, and to tell the truth, adding all the preparations and campaigns that followed the end of the

project, my work load had increased tenfold. Really. All the authors who have had their works picked up by an animation project sure are amazing.

Although the animation has ended, it does not mean that the << Mondaiji-tachi ga Isekai Kara Kuru Sou Desu yo?>> will be ending. The next volume will be released at the end of July. And I would like you to stay tuned to the important contents of the next volume.

With the story reaching this point, it will also start to pick up speed.

I also hope to speed up the publishing as much as I can . I will be greatly honored if everyone can accompany me to the end of this journey.

Hope to see everyone in the next volume. So, till then.

Taro Tatsunoko

Translator's Notes

1. ↑ [magrefnotes: Hounou-Enbu is the ritual dance in offering to the gods, like Seirei Tsukai no Blade Dance eh?]
2. ↑ [BionicMeerkat Note: I assume it meant this - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vajra]
3. ↑ [BM note - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surya]
4. ↑ [magrefnotes: this is by the lion, I got no idea on how to make tones in words yet, so I'm leaving it as it is now, the tone would have been something like referring to himself as a third person and saying that he should not leave it.]
5. ↑ [magrefnotes: 'Although it was normal for some of the young in the race to be born with the Sovereignty of the Moon, but The one that Kuro Usagi's been bestowed with from birth had been the hometown that they had lost for a long time—[Chandra Mahal].' is an addition from Chinese one, might have been an alternate of 'To think that one of their own children, not only born with the sovereignty of the moon, but also with their old home, the Chandra Mahal.' But I'm just adding it as extra since it didn't really look alike.]

6. ↑ [magrefnotes: If case you are wondering about this talk on heavenly armies, even in the Japanese Taoist/Buddhist(they call this Shinto right?) they are many factions. Not forgetting that this is the world of Gods, we are also looking at the other religions like Greek gods, Norse, etc. Adityas refer to the Juniten, I think I mentioned this in the earlier volumes.]
7. ↑ [magrefnote: From ch source notes: Avalon is one of the important islands in the Legends of King Arthur. One of the central places for old religions, and it is also known as the Fortunate Isle. The place where Caliburn(Excalibur) was forged.]
8. ↑ [magrefnotes: it's been a minute is a slang for it's been a long time. Lols was puzzled at first by this… but oh well, my fault for not knowing slags]
9. ↑ [magrefnotes: my goodness… riposte is the word I was searching for all these while and this kept going under my radar? There might be a large scale edit soon…. Tsukomi is riposte. Though I think it's okay to leave it as well according to the original translator notes: Riposte - (1) a fencer's quick return thrust following a parry (2) a retort http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/riposte]
10. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hekatonkheires
11. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baphomet

12. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shuten-d%C5%8Dji
13. ↑ Sandra's older sister http://mondaiji-tachi-ga-isekai-kara-kuru-s-desu-yo.wikia.c/wiki/Sala_Doltrake
14. ↑ [magrefnotes: this Independent is used to refer to the coming of age in rabbits and they take on a new appearance as well as the responsibilities of having grown up.]
15. ↑ [magrefnotes: I've changed things a little to make sure there's no "I" in her words… cos Kuro Usagi thinks of herself in third person.]
16. ↑ [magrefnotes: I'm not sure if the word is altruism but in direct translation it would be self-sacrifice. But altruism is the giving at the cost to oneself, without wanting of any reward/ feeling any reward . Hmm… sounds better than self-sacrifice for sure.]
17. ↑ [magrefnotes: I'm not sure if it's balcony or terrace, ch version is balcony though. So, I changed all terrace to balcony.]
18. ↑ [magrefnotes: I guess I will stick with the way people usually translate him by: Demon Lord of Confusion. Maou in Chinese is DemonKing in English but oh well… less discrepancies to the story is better right?]

19. ↑ [magrefnotes: ‘spiriting away’ did not have the ‘’ but since it did not sound correct to leave it there without changing it to Kamikakushi, I added the ‘’. Alternative would be to change all to Kamikakushi or all to ‘spiriting away’.]
20. ↑ [magrefnotes: well leave it to harem creator.] LOL - BionicMeerkat
21. ↑ [magrefnotes: the side means Izayoi’s side, she’s only able to see one side of him as he faces away from her.
22. ↑ magrefnotes: sounded like a great name [Great Sage of Maelstroms] compared to [Great Sage who devastate Seas].
23. ↑ [magrefnotes: as said by the previous translator, DingNingKluankDong is a way of censorship of perverse fantasies. So it means, it’s up to you guys to perceive it in your own fantasies :D] http://0-media-cdn.foolz.us/ffuuka/board/vp/image/1369/38/1369384153234.gif - BionicMeerkat
24. ↑ [magrefnotes: harisen is her paper fan]
25. ↑ [magrefnotes: plunder in this place is to signify the act of taking away something.]
26. ↑ [magrefnotes: 月 can be translated to o’child of the Moon Goddess. Or O’deity of the moon but not the God of the moon since is either the offspring/lower in rank to (God), (of), (Moon)]

27. ↑ [magrefnotes: < Táin Bó> also known as the cattle raid story collection of the Irish epics. <> is for book names, <<>> for Game names. A funny story of a very fertile bull that is the only difference between two competing armies in an arms race. Therefore the side that didn't have the bull was envious and wanted it… >.<]
28. ↑ [magrefnotes: turning point of history was the direct translation and the small print above it was Paradigm Shift.]
29. ↑ [magrefnotes: Queen Maeve of Connacht in the Ulster Cycle of Irish Mythology. She is best known for starting the war on the "The Cattle Raid of Cooley"]
30. ↑ [magrefnotes: I'm not too sure about this part but I guess it can be taken literally or that he wants to triumph and be in authority to demand his title restored.]
31. ↑ [magrefnotes: 'normal routine 'It was a proverb in the ch version, should be a proverb in Jap too, but can't think up an English version of the proverb.]
32. ↑ [magrefnotes: I state again that Lesser dragons is used to mean a lower grade dragon. Though the Fire Dragons are also lower grade compared to the Dragons of the Zodiacs, this situation, we will not take that comparison into account.]

33. ↑ [magrefnotes: sure kill ultimate move.]
34. ↑ [magrefnotes: love to the point of being mentally unstable, wanting to kill the beloved to express it]
35. ↑ [magrefnotes: there are lone leaps through the portals and those that open the portals to allow multiple others to pass through.]
36. ↑ [magrefnotes: Marchosias is the 35th Pillar of the Seventy-two pillars of Solomon's Demons. The Marquis that commands thirty armies, he's a strong warrior that takes the form of a wolf with the wings of a Gryphon and a serpent's tail with fire-breathing abilities. Has the ability to take on the appearance of Man]
37. ↑ [magrefnotes: Demon Lord of Confusion is a very old demon that existed during the time of Sun Wu Kong… Graiya would be a young urn in comparison]
38. ↑ [magrefnotes: I'm not sure how to describe this twist of the neck action. Have you seen the action of people making the cracking sound of their necks as they turn it left and right very quickly just to relief the aches? It's something like that…suggestions for the description of this action would be appreciated]

39. ↑ [magrefnotes: I will say once more that Graiya speaks in old language, so his “I”, “me”, “You” are all different..... but I’ve not been able to capture them in the translations.]
40. ↑ [magrefnotes: translating the ch book’s Note: A cockatrice is a cross between a chicken and a snake. Head of a chicken, body that has two pairs of wings like a dragon, and a tail like that of a snake, without feathers, but covered in scales. It is said that they hatch from chicken eggs and their gaze is fatal. They must hatch from their incubation on the day when the Star of Sirius is high in the skies, and be fertilized by a seven year old cock. This sort of egg would be easy to differentiate. They wouldn’t be of the normal oval shaped egg but take on a spherical shape that has no shell. Covered by a thick layer of skin, this egg must be incubated by a toad to hatch.]
41. ↑ [magrefnotes: ch version calls it 本 which means your great grandfather in direct translation. It’s just like the insult of saying you are the parent and talking down to a child, being greater and such. I’m sure the jap version would have been different but in the meantime, I will just translate it to the ‘Great Me’.]
42. ↑ [magrefnotes: Oudou- Path of the King Thanks to unrail, on wordpress. King can also be synonymous

to Lords in this novel…. That's why I've been having trouble with the Demon King/Lord of Confusion… um maybe it's the confusion part as well… oh well :p]

43. ↑ [magrefnotes: portal needs to be linked from hell to real world. If doorway is closed to open a new one, live person dies.]
44. ↑ [magrefnotes: Well, chained attacks like combo attacks in games….loop cast? :X]
45. ↑ [magrefnotes: coppelia, a comic ballet originally choreographed by Arthur Saint-Léon to the music of Léo Delibes, with libretto by Charles Nuitter. According to wikipedia: Coppélia concerns an inventor, Dr Coppelius, who has made a life-size dancing doll. It is so lifelike that Franz, a guy, becomes infatuated with it and sets aside his true heart's desire, Swanhilde. The inventor is an eccentric person who wants to bring his creation to life with a live sacrifice---Franz, the convenient person who trespassed. Swanhilde wanders in and discovers the plan, pretending to be a 'live' Coppelia to rescue Franz as she activates all the other mechanical dolls. Whole incident was then settled by $$ which leaves the eccentric inventor placated.]
46. ↑ [magrefnotes: when described as hot and flushed, it is the sign of a person having performed much

physical activities and in danger of dehydration… but this case only flushed to mean the coloration of the skin being a reddish tinge.]

47. ↑ [magrefnotes:“—”if you can’t see this due to the lack of computer program, it’s the Chinese characters which will be translated to [nothing is accomplished] and reasons for that can be futility of efforts/ no effort was made. My guess is that he should have died in that hit but it was negated.]
48. ↑ [magrefnotes: it wasn’t bolded, just bolded it to show the incantation. +italic too. If you wonder why it is thunder and not lightning, it is an old saying… Pikachu is a lightning or thunder pokemon? THUNDER! My guess is that they have the same belief of thunder and lightning like the Chinese. Thunder Gods and all because the sound is scarier than the light, even though the light is the one that will make them charred and crispy.]
49. ↑ [magrefnotes: notebyCNTL: Aegis is a divine shield of the Greek mythologies and half is said to be owned by Zeus while the other half is with Athena. Crafted by Hephaestus using the hide of a Divine Mountain Goat, it is the sturdiest Sheild that cannot be struck down by the lightning bolt of Zeus. Differences between the two shields are: Functions of Athena’s shield include: Symbol of feat, able to

track, symbol of violence and war and the ability to petrify. Whereas the functions of Zeus's shield: gathers the clouds, hold the ability to create dark clouds, with a wave, it can generate violent winds and when released into the skies, it will darken the skies and will only brighten once more when retrieved.]

50. ↑ [magrefnotes: like the Naruto one… hmmm is that called reel of scroll or scroll reel?]
51. ↑ [magrefnotes:Odd sounding but this game title was provided. Thou-You, thy- your, some words I added th behind to make it sound old.]
52. ↑ [magrefnotes: Ancient Chinese Dragons have these whisker like things on their snout, called feelers, supposedly in Taoist stories, it's because they were koi fish before they leap across the dragon gate to transform into dragons. That's also why magikarp evolves to gyrados.]
53. ↑ [magrefnotes: May it have an eternal sleep. But due to the poetic mysterious way they phrase it, I cannot add the 'it' which would make it very clear.]
54. ↑ [magrefnotes: Yeah! Stalker, get out!]
55. ↑ [magrefnotes: is this a pick-up line?:o]
56. ↑ [magrefnotes: she's hooked -.- would be lolicon harem if he weren't that young.]
57. ↑ [magrefnotes: I think I explained sepsis before…]

58. ↑ [magrefnotes: there's a conflict. Another version in the ch book is 'there would only be one person who could turn the tables……']
59. ↑ [magrefnotes: check the addressing method for Jin . By Asuka]
60. ↑ [magrefnotes: Alternate version in my book: 'My comrade has taken to the Centre of this entire stage. If I do not play my part as a Side, wouldn't he be overwhelmed by the pressure?' I think this might be referring to the way J-pop groups are arranged. The centre as in the leader of the team usually dances at the front, centre of focus… while the side are to dance just as well to complement. It is said that if they are unable to keep up, the feeling is just like being overwhelmed by the stress and the whole performance would be over… but I guess this is the ch book trying to play around again. Apparently they do not translate it directly and tries their best to incorporate ch elements or jap culture elements for the book. Online versions tend to be direct translations though… too direct at times.]
61. ↑ [magrefnotes: suggest ways to improve this, thanks!]
62. ↑ [magrefnotes: refer to the previous chapters or if you are lazy, it is just the name of one of the two wrath-filled and muscular guardians of the Buddha,

standing today at the entrance of many Buddhist temples… directly copied from Wiki]

63. ↑ [magrefnotes: Huang Long(ch), Koryu or Ōryū(jap) hmm could it be that Kouryuu was from this name? Oh well, the Yellow Dragon(direct translation) is one of the guardians in the four corners. It is the fifth symbolic guardian of the four corners---the centre and represents the element earth for Chinese, and the void for the Japanese. Void magic Saito eh? Anyways, the other four guardians are Azure Dragon of the East represents Wood (spring), the Vermilion Bird of the South represents Fire (summer), the White Tiger of the West represents Metal (autumn), and the Black Turtle (or Dark Warrior) of the North represents Water (winter). Most commonly seen in books about FengShui. If I'm not wrong there's a yellow dragon clan mentioned earlier. I will have to check that up too.]
64. ↑ [magrefnotes: boy+sound effect 'ah' together becomes boya]
65. ↑ [magrefnotes: this Great Sage here refers to Sun Wukong. He's substituting Kouryuu as the target instead as Sun Wukong is unreachable for the normal people.]

66. ↑ [magrefnotes: that's really kind of you or something along those lines.]
67. ↑ [magref: levees can be man-made or natural, the slightly elevated sides of the river bank that prevents the flow from flooding out of the river channel.]
68. ↑ [magrefnotes: palanquin is the vehicle of the rich/ royals/ upper class to get around. It is a covered litter for one passenger, consisting of a large box carried on two horizontal poles by four or six bearers. In the East or India.]
69. ↑ [magrefnotes: magma is the molten rock within the volcano. When it rises out of the volcano, above ground, it will be called lava.]
70. ↑ [magrefnotes: its something like the evil star or devil's star but was it called star of omens in English ? Can't really seem to remember about those astrology, would be good if someone could suggest the proper one.]
71. ↑ [magrefnotes: action-reaction pair. Newton's third law of motion. If A exert a force on B, B will exert the same and opposite force on A.]
72. ↑ [magrefnotes: I got no idea what they are trying to say by saying blood being able to be held back by muscles. It goes beyond common sense and I get that.]

73. ↑ [magrefnotes: 悪—which means evil, is the character of the Flag, [Aksara] is the name of the flag .]
74. ↑ [magrefnotes: this part is similar to how Sun Wu Kong was said to be waiting for hundreds of years before his master appeared. Anyways, I kind of took the idea from the wikia page for Azi Dahaka. Thank you, um… contributor:]]